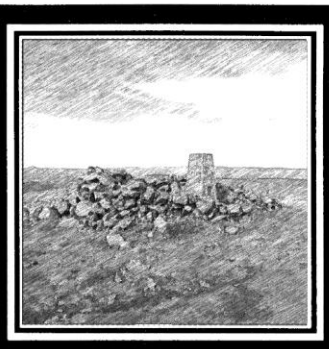
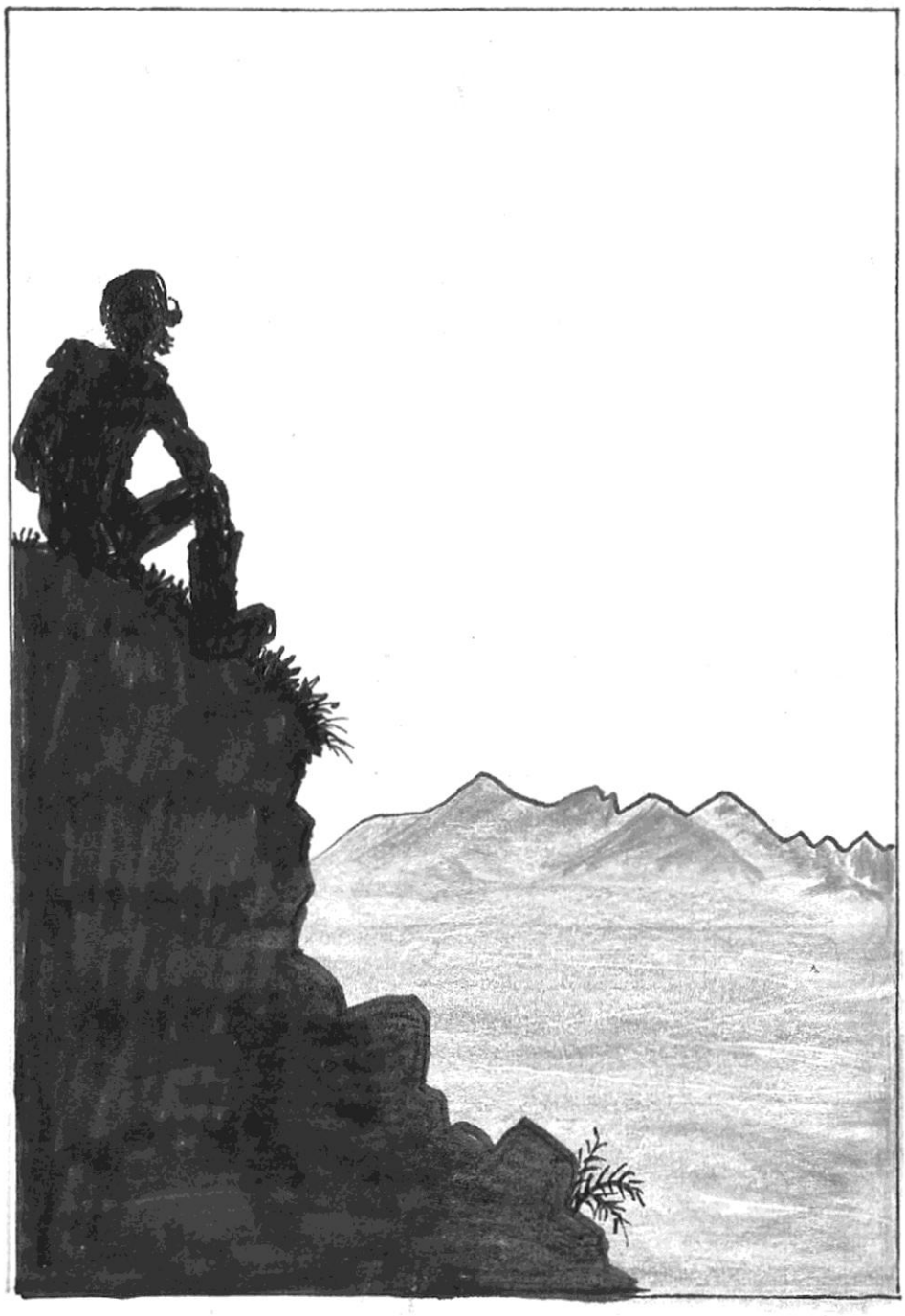
The Angry Corrie



1961-2025

DAVE HEWITT MEMORIAL EDITION



AND SO FAREWELL ...

SPECIAL BUMPER EDITION!

Inside:

...We walk the line

...You can call me Al

...Corbo-docharties

...On me Ed, son

...Ochils get a mention!

...White on the right, white on the left

...Lots of numbers

...Carto-graphical pedantry!

...plus gorse fires, dead legs, scary deer, DTs, sardines, the Beatles and much, much more

TAC

From an original idea by:
Dave Hewitt & Perkin Warbeck

Special thanks to:
Tessa Carroll

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Val Hamilton, Perkin Warbeck

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Major supporting roles:
Bert Barnett, Allison Coull

And with the cooperation of:
Scottish Chess, the Scottish Mountaineering Club

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The Angry Corrie origin story:

Dave loved football fanzines. I recall him enthusing about *When Saturday Comes*. At some point it dawned on him (with no prior market research or – perish the thought – branding) that there was a need for a hillwalking fanzine.

Not a Munro-bagging fanzine, although that topic would get covered. The main idea was to be irreverent.

Initially it was laid out on an Apple Macintosh (hangs head in shame) belonging to one of our mates. Eventually we both had PCs and it was laid out in something called PageMaker. I guess we bought this.

The Corrie was always produced on a shoestring. I was constantly nagging Dave (to no avail) to put up the 50p price to offset some of the expenditure (he bought one of the first laser printers).

It stayed at 50p for fourteen years. The National Library of Scotland has a near-complete run (lacking only No.78) – theirs was the first address on the sheets of labels that we hand-applied.

We took a wee while to name the nascent organ, and it has often needed to be explained.

It derived from a sketch by the Scottish comedian Bing Hitler. He was actually Craig Ferguson, who went on to huge fame in that lawless country sandwiched between Canada and Mexico.

Bing Hitler was riffing on the Scottish folk duo *The Corries*. He characterised them as **The Sad Corrie** – Roy Williamson – who penned *Flower of Scotland* and sang in a *Wild Mountain Thyme*-y way; and **The Angry Corrie** – Ronnie Browne – who bashed the *bodhran* and snarled about the English.

Bing invented his own Angry Corrie song about Edward I's invading army:

They shaved the beards off
our mothers
With razors made of bronze
They stole all the good LPs
And ate all the tattie scones.

Hence the name.

It had to be distributed, obviously – and at first we just visited all the outdoor shops begging them to sell it. Some friendly links were forged – and there was an *Angry Corrie* discount to be had at some. Outdoor hostelries were another outlet – the Clachaig and The Green Welly Stop. An outlier was the Drovers' Inn – which one might have thought would be a dead cert – but nothing doing.

It remains a mystery to me how we accumulated the praetorian guard who are assembled in this memorial edition. It was definitely a function of Dave's willingness to correspond (and in the early days this was by snail mail) with everyone who ever made contact.

Various friends were inveigled into the Corrie's backroom staff. Chris Tyler, the Swan (aka Craig Smillie), Julia Anderson, Tessa Carroll – and there is an unseen cloud of witnesses who pop up all the time on social media lamenting the Corrie's passing.

Perkin Warbeck

First words written in *The Angry Corrie*:

"Welcome to Issue No. 1 of **The Angry Corrie**. Come away in, pull up a chair & sit yersel down!"

Unless you count the cover, in which case they were:

"Hamish! Quick! You can see Muriel Gray skinnydipping fae here!"

SLAVING AWAY HERE IN THE TAC Portakabin, we generally avoid contact with ChatGPT and its ilk. There's that needy, almost stalkerish, sycophancy. There's that willingness to just talk confident bullshit on topics it knows nothing about. If ChatGPT trapped you in a corner at a party, you'd desperately avoid imparting any personal information, for fear of it turning up on your social media, or even on your doorstep, the following morning.

But the other day we felt mysteriously impelled to ask for its opinion on one of the great foundational stories of *The Angry Corrie*, eloquently set out by Perkin Warbeck on the preceding page. A long conversation ensued – sometimes confusing, sometimes annoying, sometimes confusing *and* annoying, but always tedious.

Then, just as we were about to scream and return to what passes for Real Life, ChatGPT perkily announced its willingness to provide a tabular summary of the discussion so far. What it then manifested was, in effect, a list of **Eight Differences Between the Angry Corrie and *The Angry Corrie***.

Here it is. So near, and yet so far...

The Angry Corries: A Scottish Cultural Coincidence

Aspect	**Ronnie Browne ("The Angry Corrie")**	***The Angry Corrie* (fanzine)**
Identity	Member of Scottish folk duo *The Corries*	Quarterly Scottish hillwalking fanzine
Active	1960s–1990s (music)	1991–present (fanzine)
Nickname / Title	"The Angry Corrie" –a playful nickname for his vigorous stage presence	*The Angry Corrie* – title of the magazine, reflecting its irreverent, contrarian style
Personality / Tone	Loud, dramatic, fiery on stage; intense *bodhran* rhythms; comic vocal lines like *"Hey dum a-hidder dum a hey dum dan"*	Irreverent, anti-establishment, opinionated; quirky takes on hills and mountaineering culture; deliberately humorous
Domain	Music / Scottish folk	Hillwalking / outdoor culture
Instruments / Tools	*Bodhrán*, guitar, vocals	Pen, paper, reader contributions, sketches, and cartoons
Cultural Role	Iconic Scottish folk performer; co-writer of *Flower of Scotland*	Cult-favorite zine in Scottish hillwalking community; known for contrarian humor and unconventional content
Connection to the other "Angry Corrie"	Purely metaphorical resemblance; no documented influence	Title likely chosen for pun and tone; no evidence it references Ronnie Browne or *The Corries*

Commentary

- Both "Angry Corries" share a **combative, feisty, distinctly Scottish tone**, though in very different arenas.
- Ronnie Browne's "anger" is performative, musical, and theatrical.
- The fanzine's "anger" is literary, contrarian, and playful – often poking fun at mainstream mountaineering tropes.
- The overlap is metaphorical and cultural rather than historical or intentional, yet it makes for a charming coincidence in Scottish heritage.

MUCKING AROUND IN THE FOUNTAINS

— One of the great lost potential titles for *The Angry Corrie.*

‘Big Dave’ Hewitt – 1961 to 2025

some reminiscences by ‘Little Dave’ MacLaren

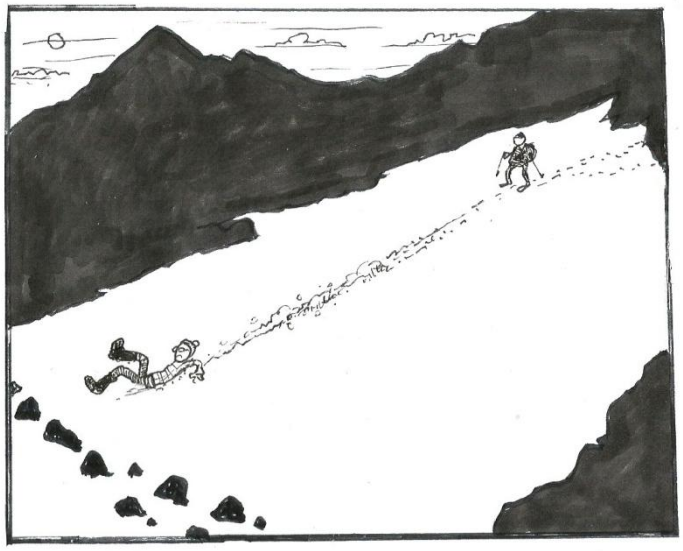
I FIRST MET DAVE as a student in Aberdeen in around 1980, when he and I both helped fry onions and burgers at Cobweb, an after-pub-hours drop-in centre at St Nicholas church run by the minister Lance Stone and a team of student helpers – some of whom (including Dave) lodged at his large manse nearby.

When an outing to climb Lochnagar was mooted, I was keen, as I loved being amongst the Scottish hills. So it was that a group of people, and Lance and Sally’s dog, made the trip via Glen Muick and Dave was enthusiastic about the whole experience: the start of a lifelong passion.

Soon after he acquired a copy of *Munro’s Tables* and discovered a world of routes, tops, etc. He and I made a few return visits to Lochnagar to collect the tops we had missed before, and other nearby Munros. Being convenient for Aberdeen we often had other friends joining us on these forays.

Dave soon bought a tent for weekend trips to Glenshee and the Cairngorms. On the first of these we managed to bag eleven Munros from a campsite near the A93 at the Cairnwell (without using chairlifts of course!).

Another weekend that lives long in the memory began from a camp site near Derry Lodge in the Cairngorms on a sunny midsummer’s day, when fortuitously (as it transpired) a sponsored walk through the Lairig Ghru was taking place. We set off in shorts and t-shirts to romp up the hills to the west of the Lairig, taking in the Devil’s Point, Angel’s Peak, Cairn Toul and Braeriach from where we planned to descend to the Lairig Ghru for the walk back to the tent. As luck would have it, we came across the only patch of snow for miles around, nestled into the northeast-facing slope of Braeriach, and decided not to skirt round it but continue down through it – big mistake! Dave was not used to hiking in snow and soon lost his balance, slipping and then becoming a human toboggan gathering speed down the slope. All might have been well but for a sharp band of rocks running across the middle, which Dave hit at speed before continuing to the foot of the snow where he finally stopped. For a few moments he lay motionless as I – fearing the worst – hurried down to catch up. As it turned out he had not been concussed or broken any bones but had a nasty wound on his abdomen which put paid to any notion of walking farther. I was able to support him down to the Lairig footpath where fortunately he had company to keep an eye on him whilst I ran back to the emergency telephone four miles south at Derry Lodge. Boosted by adrenalin I ran as quickly as I could (without risking twisting my ankle) and called Mountain Rescue at Braemar. They then took over and sent a helicopter from Kinloss to collect Dave and evacuated him to Ninewells Hospital in Dundee. They also came to me in a Land Rover, recorded my story in Braemar and returned me to the tent. The following day I carried our gear back out and reached the car near Linn of Dee. I then set off for the drive back to Aberdeen and drove into a ditch suffering from heat exhaustion. Fortunately, a nice lady brought me a cup of tea and contacted a garage in Braemar to take the car and me; later I caught the bus back to Aberdeen!



You would think that this experience would have put Dave off the hills (and me) for life, but after recovering from the stitches and resting for a few weeks he was back on the trail, albeit more cautiously.

There are many more experiences that I shared with Dave, who at 6′8″ tall was known as “Big Dave” – I became “Little Dave” as I was a mere 6′2″! I have many happy memories including an ascent of Ben Wyvis with my sister and wee brother – who must have been around ten years old at the time; also with my brother-in-law Angus on at least one occasion. Once in late October on Creag Meagaidh in the Central Highlands, Dave had to get me down to shelter quickly when I started slurring my speech due to hypothermia, thereby rescuing me.

When I moved to London in 1985 our hill days were curtailed but not stopped altogether: I remember a Spring Bank Holiday overnight drive from London to Skye, with friends Richard and Paul, to camp in Glen Brittle and meet up with Dave and several friends from Glasgow, where he was living. We enjoyed ascents of Sgurr na Banachdich and Blaven.

When Dave undertook the massive challenge of walking the length of the Scottish watershed, about which he wrote a book full of humorous anecdotes of his experiences, he faced the physical challenge of weeks mainly alone on the route (with no marked path over much of it) and the logistics of organising food supplies and laundry. Many people assisted with this exercise, consisting mainly of friends in Glasgow who were the main destination for dirty

laundry, and who prepared food parcels in sealed biscuit tins to be buried at key road crossings along the route. Richard* and I joined Dave in the Great Glen for one stage of his walk and left him to continue whilst a parcel was duly buried at the pre-arranged location – hidden so well it took him some time to unearth! Farther north my sister Catriona, her husband Angus and family took a parcel to meet Dave along the road from Lairg to Laxford Bridge and failed to see him at first as he had gone into someone's cottage (for a cuppa perhaps?). They did find him in the end and the exchange of food and laundry went to plan! It was a relief to everyone when he completed the epic trip at Cape Wrath and returned home.

Dave kept meticulous records of all the hills he had climbed and who with, as well as key details. He loved to summarise these from time to time in emails – such as his "first Munro of the year" message which generated some banter in return. I was glad when my friend Mike, also a graduate of Aberdeen, started joining Dave on his hill days, and there were many others who were good and regular companions – although he was also happy to walk alone. He must have set a record when he completed 1700 ascents of Ben Cleuch in the Ochils – his local hill after moving to Cambuskenneth with Tessa, his very significant other.

* Richard lost a geological hammer on this walk that was subsequently found by David Iles who, having read *Walking the Watershed*, realised whose it must be before posting it back to its owner in North London some time later – as recorded in *The Angry Corrie*.

They made a great team and were such a pleasure to visit – I am only sorry that it was so long since I last saw them, in 2021, when Rachel and I visited them on the way back from my nephew's wedding in Easter Ross.

Other memorable days were:

- Dave's completion Munro in 2007, when around fifty people were present on The Saddle in Glen Shiel to celebrate this milestone, by which time he had 1000 Munro ascents in total under his belt!
- My hiking boots falling apart on a day's walking in the Langdale Pikes, where I tied the sole to the upper with a spare bootlace and made it down to a convenient hiking shop in Coniston where I was immediately able to replace them – much to the amusement of Tessa and her Mum when we joined them later.
- A hot summer's day in 2018 when Dave completed his round of Wainwrights on Catbells in the Lake District, celebrating with a bottle of Wainwright beer and several friends!

He was most at ease with a small group of friends, just one companion or even alone on the hills, where he was so much at home. In a letter he wrote in 2007 he fully detailed the dates and companions on the ninety-one Munros he and I climbed together. This plus seven repeats made a total of ninety-eight, almost but not quite a "century"! I will treasure the memories and regret that I will not walk with him again on this side of the Great Divide.

RIP Big Dave

Totally useless equipment guide: The Sandwich Box

by Dave Summers

Advantages:

- It protects your sandwiches from getting squashed.
- It proves you've prepared in advance for going on the hill.
- It can – at a stretch – stimulate conversation about whether it has any other advantages.

Disadvantages:

These are best illustrated from experience. At one time I had a habit of last-minute preparation, to the extent that I could pack my rucksack with dry rolls, some butter or spread, a few fillings and – if I was to some degree organised – a knife, and combine these ingredients into sandwiches at a suitable summit or resting point.

But one evening I was more than usually ready for the next day's hillwalk. Not only had I made my sandwiches, I'd even packed them neatly into a two-kilogram margarine tub and put them in the fridge, ready for the morning.

So my friend and I set off, climbed a steep and unfrequented route in the rain, reached the ridge leading to the summit, and about mid-day I slipped on a wet rock and sat down slightly more heavily than usual. *OK*, I thought, *time for a sandwich*. I took the sandwich box out of my bag, opened it, and found two kilograms of margarine inside.

As I said, it does at least protect your sandwiches from getting squashed.

Talking the Watershed

> In the midst of phonecall assurances that Yes, I would keep in touch, Yes, I would wrap up warm, she asked the question which had been ticking over in her mind since first hearing of the project: "There'll be a path all the way, won't there?" Yes, mother, yes.
> I was ready to go.

So begins Dave's account of his south-to-north walk along Scotland's watershed, as recounted in his book, *Walking the Watershed*. In imperial units, the numbers have a rhythm that must have pleased him – 80 days, 800 miles, 80,000 feet of ascent.

People have done it since, but in 1987 Dave was the first to come up with and execute such a plan, describing it as "the only route through Scotland not to involve crossing a river".

He plotted his course using red pen marks on 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey sheets. Nowadays, you can use a digital elevation model and a web app to plot a watershed in a few seconds. I've used Matthew Heberger's *Global Watersheds* website (mghydro.com/watersheds) to help generate my maps.

If you haven't already, you should read the book – it's like a succession of long days in the hills in knowledgeable company, with a lot of chat along the way. But I want to write about just three small sections of the walk – the beginning, the middle, and the end – all of which strike me as topographically interesting.

❐❐❐❐❐

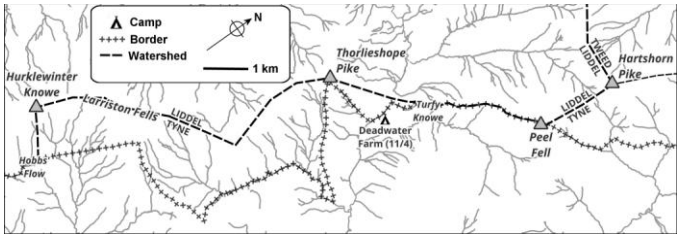
The Beginning: Dave goes the extra [eight] mile[s]

At the English border, the Scottish watershed is defined by the waters of the Liddel (flowing westwards) and the Tyne (flowing eastwards). At its most extreme excursion, between Peel Fell and Knox Knowe, the drainage basin of the Tyne extends just over a kilometre into Scottish territory. So to follow the watershed in this area you start at Peel Fell, on the border, and walk north to Hartshorn Pike, where you encounter the headwaters of the Tweed and turn west, to pursue the Liddel-Tweed watershed. Most watershed traverses since Dave's have started at Peel Fell, and have followed that short section of Liddel-Tyne watershed north.

But, as my map shows, Dave did something different. He started his route at a point eleven kilometres, as the crow flies, southwest of Peel Fell, in a boggy corner of the border called Hobbs' Flow. Water from this otherwise undistinguished patch of heath drains into Clark's Sike and thence into Liddel Water, westwards; *but also* into Birkey Grain, then the Tyne, and so eastwards. North of Hobbs' Flow, the Tyne's headwaters transgress into Scotland, forming a Liddel-Tyne watershed that runs for seven kilometres, first along the crest of Larriston Fells and then on to Thorlieshope Pike. Beyond that point, the watershed crosses the head of the North Tyne valley, climbs Turfy Knowe, and then follows the border up on to Peel Fell. So, obviously, Dave had to walk that section, too.

He made his first camp in the North Tyne valley at Deadwater, ready to head up Peel Fell in the morning. He had clear skies after a day of foul-weather route-finding:

> Darkness falls, the temperature gains a cold edge, I hurry back to the tent for a satisfying night's sleep: the only one of the walk to be spent in England.



The Middle: The waters are parted

> Only where the watershed crossed the Central Belt – the relatively low-lying ground between Glasgow and Edinburgh – was there any cartographical confusion, with trickles of burns and even artificially-cut drainage channels sometimes seeming to do the impossible by flowing both ways simultaneously.

The specific problem here was that the 1:50,000 map showed Biggar Water apparently draining both east and west – east along its natural course into the Tweed, but also heavily canalised in its upper reaches and connecting west to the Clyde.

As Dave descended towards the Southern Upland Fault after leaving Culter Fell, there was a water feature ahead called Back Ditch that the 1:50,000 clearly showed connecting at its west end to Culter Water and thence to the Clyde. So he threaded the short gap between the eastern end of Back Ditch and the headwaters of the Kilbucho Burn, crossing from White Hill to Goseland Hill. Beyond that was Biggar Water, which at this point was:

> ... a daunting irrigation ditch: sluggish and deep, steep muddy banks dropping to dark, reedy water giving no hint of a bottom.

After making a diversion to find a footbridge, Dave reports:

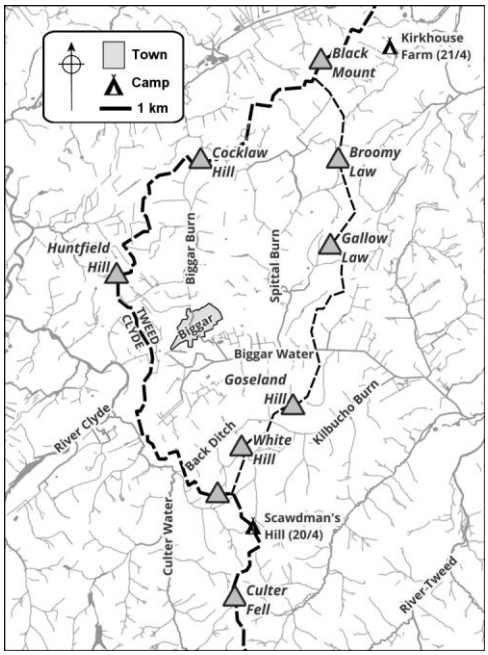
> I sit trying to work out the exact line of the watershed before giving up none the wiser. So flat is this stretch of land between the two great rivers that times of exceptional flood see the Clyde burst its banks and spill into the Tweed – technically creating an island of Scotland north of here.

So he continued his line northwards, keeping west of those streams that unequivocally drained into the Tweed. I've marked that watershed lightly on my map.

Modern software places the watershed farther west, though, and I've marked this with a bolder line. The reason for the difference is that modern, detailed watercourse data, like the OS Open Data I've used for the watercourses in this map, show

neither Biggar Water nor Back Ditch connecting westwards to the Clyde – each stops short by just a few hundred metres. A look at Google Earth's aerial photography shows dry ditches in these locations, with substantial trees growing in them – so these are not watercourses that see frequent flow, but they do seem to be potential watercourses, perhaps carrying the Clyde floodwaters that Dave described.

The computed watershed therefore crosses these dry ditches and stays west of the Biggar Burn, before reuniting with Dave's route at Black Mount. And, at this point, I imagine Dave would note how his alternative route runs between White Hill and Black Mount and would interject: (*Ed— it was never a black-and-white decision*).



The End: The ways diverge

> Scotland also boasts a dim and distant north coast, and this comes into play at the top end of the watershed. I was forced to choose between one end of my walk being Cape Wrath, at the northwestern tip, or Duncansby Head, its sibling in the far northeast. The split – a kind of geological Georgemas Junction – occurred so far up in Sutherland's Reay Forest, so near the northwestern end of things, that my choice was never really in doubt: the Caithness diversion would involve some fifty miles more. Not only that, while both variations reached the sea at suitably impressive sea cliffs, the Cape Wrath option kept up its hill-character all the way, whereas the John o' Groats branch [would] have taken me through the bogs and flatlands of the Flow Country.

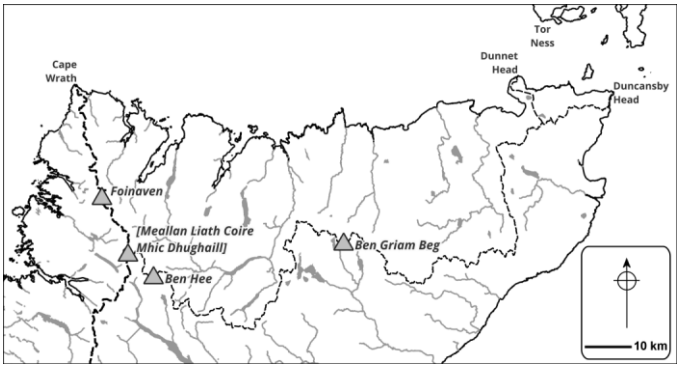
So Dave's decision, as the first person to undertake this journey, was both practical (who knew what rigours might be involved in getting to the point at which the watershed divides), and based on a personal mountain aesthetic.

A Duncansby endpoint for the watershed seems to have a longer history – it's mentioned in nineteenth-century gazetteers and atlases – and it has been a more popular finishing point for those who have travelled the watershed since Dave's landmark achievement.

The point of divergence comes on the eastern shoulder of the splendidly named Meallan Liath Coire Mhic Dhughaill. Here's how Dave describes it:

> Then comes a significant, long-awaited moment. I crest the steep, stony pull onto the Corbett-height Carn Dearg, and in so doing reach the point where north-flowing water comes into play – ie where the watershed forks into east–north and west–north branches. I step across, back, across again, with the same childish glee which saw me do the same thing, years before, at a bridge on the Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire county boundary. Now I take things a stage further – and must confess to performing a little dance of delight on the ridge!

The Cape Wrath terminus has the distinction of better preserving the northerly trend of the west–east watershed, whereas the Duncansby Head route takes the walker on a weaving, generally eastward course. But one sometimes sees the Duncansby terminus held up as marking the One True Watershed, because it purportedly follows the line of division between water flowing into the North Sea and water going into the Atlantic. This doesn't bear examination, though. There's an actual international committee responsible for setting the official boundaries between bodies of water – the International Hydrographic Organization. In 1953, they produced Special Publication No.23, *Limits of Oceans and Seas*. Section 4 deals with the North Sea, and stipulates that its northwestern limit runs from Dunnet Head on the Scottish mainland to Tor Ness on the Orcadian island of Hoy. That is, the entire Pentland Firth is included in the North Sea.



So anyone serious about walking the Atlantic / North Sea watershed would need to turn left at an undistinguished and apparently unnamed 72m lump (ND 255 666), and weave their way north to Dunnet Head. So far, no-one seems to have done that, and I don't blame them – the extreme northeast point of the mainland seems a more logical extension of the general eastward trend of that watershed.

Dave might have added: (*Ed— The grid reference for the breakpoint on the eastern watershed contains the Number of the Beast. Surely that's telling us something?*)

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(Maps contain OS Open Data © Crown copyright and database right 2018, and OpenStreetMap data © OpenStreetMap contributors under the Open Database Licence)

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Grant Hutchison

Introducing… The Lennon to McCartney Walk

by David Gray and Nick Spedding

WE WERE DEEPLY SADDENED to learn of Dave's passing. He was remarkably tolerant of our rantings on wildernistas and windfarms in TAC, and particularly enthusiastic for, and encouraging of, our Elvis to Presley walk (TAC69; more of which below), for which he provided valuable and much appreciated editorial advice. He was, to hint at what follows, something of a George Martin figure.

If the Elvis to Presley was David's invention, Nick came up with a subsequent idea for a stravaig, The **Lennon to McCartney** walk, starting at the John Lennon Memorial garden in Durness and ending at the lighthouse at the tip of the Mull of Kintyre. The two walks have the same ethos: a starting point, an end point, and, in between, some (*You've Got to Hide Your Love A*)way points to join up, formulated from some very poor puns, largely based on song titles. Both walks also suffer the same key weakness imposed by nominative order, committing conscientious walkers to head into the prevailing southwesterly winds and rain! Other than that, it is up to the walker to plan the rest of the route and thus create their own *Magical Mystery Tour.*

On various occasions over the last… er… twenty years, we have discussed walking the Lennon-McCartney, but we never could quite manage to *Come Together* to do it. We think that the last ever TAC is an ideal opportunity to unleash it *Across the Universe*. So, if any social-media-savvy young Quarrymen fancy being the *Fools on the Hills* and taking the *Long and Winding Road* between Lennon and McCartney – before we get around to doing *Something* about it (probably, *When We're 64*) – be our guests! Go and raise some *Money (That's What I Want)* for a good cause and make sure you give a *Twist and Shout* out to TAC and to the memory of Dave Hewitt.

So here are our (Y*ou've Got to Hide Your Love A*)way points for the Lennon McCartney:

Lennon to McCartney walk		
***You've Got to Hide Your Love A…*way point**	**Landranger**	**Grid reference**
John Lennon Memorial Garden, Durness	9	NC 413 672
Old Brown Smoo	9	NC 418 671
[Beinn S]pionnaidh Lane	9	NC 362 572
Roll over Foinaven	9	NC 315 507
Glen Golly Miss Molly[1]	9	NC 424 434
Maxwell's Suilven Hammer	15	NC 153 183
Isle [George] Martin	19	NH 092 993
Stornoway Fields Forever	8	NB 424 327
Harris[on]	14	
Leverburgh/An t-Ob[-La-Di...]	18	NG 013 863
Back in the UistsSR	18	
Lucy in the Skye with Diamonds	23, 32	
Yes-Storr-day	23	NG 495 540
Octopus's Garbh-Bheinn	32	NG 531 232
Loch Shiel Loves You	40	NG 944 182
Love Meall Dubh	34	NH 245 078
Ringo Steall	41	NN 179 682
Leum Uilleim (909m) followed by Beinn a' Bhric (876m) – the latter being the *One After 909*	41	NN 317 641
Get Brack	56	NN 245 030
I Feel Fyne	50, 55, 56	
Maharishi Ma(chrihan)hesh Yogi	68	NR 635 207
Mull of Kintyre	68	NR 587 084

[1] We can't confirm Good Golly Miss Molly was part of the Fab Four's set in Hamburg, but we would like to think it was. Perhaps Paul or Ringo could confirm either way once they receive their copy of TAC79.

The locations we suggest above outline a route that heads south from Durness to Ullapool, and then takes a sweep through the Western Isles, back across Skye to Kintail, heading southeast towards Glen Nevis, before tracking east (almost as far as Corrour station), then south past Strath Orchy and across Argyll towards Kintyre. The detail? *We Can Work it Out.* Existing long-distance paths, such as the Cape Wrath Trail, the West Highland Way, the Loch Lomond and Cowal Way, and the Kintyre Way, will be helpful, but part of the challenge could be to devise routes that avoid established ones. Anyone for Beinn Bhuidhe from the north, *en route* to Glen Fyne? Use of a *Bata-Tumaidh Buidhe* would be helpful, otherwise *a Ticket to Ride* will be required for various ferry trips!

The table above sets out our core route. There are other Beatles-inspired places that we would like to visit, although the hefty detours required would be pun-itive, taking us *Here, There and Everywhere*. These include *PS Isle of Ewe*; *Mam Rubber Sodhail*; *Sgt. Strathpeffer's Lonely Hearts Club Band*; *Eleanor Nigg Bay* – or, if anyone has a packraft or that *Yellow Submarine, Eilean an Righ-by*; the stretch of Loch Lomond from *All You Need is Luss* to *The Balloch of John and Yoko*; *Baby You Can Drive My Arrochar*; *Goatfell, ma belle*...; and *Cir Mhor No-one.* Anyone wishing to include an extreme way point on Skye could include *A Hard Day's Knight's Peak*, on Pinnacle Ridge, Sgurr nan Gillean!

When we did the Elvis to Presley all of twenty years ago, we were time-constrained by annual leave. And it has always been a little irksome that we had to cut out a couple of lengthy corners and miss out a couple of *I Did It My Way* points. As far as we know, no one has repeated the Elvis to Presley (apart from Davie Balfour on his bike) but if anyone fancies a go at the full fat, late Vegas era route, in all its *glory, glory hallelujah* – for the first time – here it is:

Elvis to Presley walk		
***I Did it My* Way point**	**Landranger**	**Grid reference**
Elvis Voe	4	HU 507 448
Viva Lash V[agu]eness[2]	6	HY 379 050
Love Letterewe Estate from your heart	19	NG 979 723
Loch Maree is the Name of His Latest Flame	19	NG 914 713
The Wonder of Ewe	19	NG 862 801
Baosbheinn Nova Baby	19	NG 870 654
I Can't Help Falling in Kinlochewe	19	NH 029 619
That's Alright Monar	25	NH 137 406
King Sgritheall	33	NG 835 126
Glen King-ie and Sgurr Mor[3]	33	NM 965 980
It's Now or Nevis	41	NN 166 712
Don't Be Corrour-el[4]	41	NN 356 664
King-ussie	42	NH 757 006
You're the Devil's Point in Disguise	43	NN 976 951
Presley	27	NJ 012 509

[2] The Lash refers both to a skerry just offshore, and to a nearby cottage of the same name, and we never really bothered to define which one is the My Way point.

[3] Elvis's guitarist was Scotty Moore. Say Scotty Moore in a Presley drawl and you get "Sgurr Mor" (one for the purists, admittedly).

[4] That pun never worked, to be fair.

Garfield Trumper-Bradman, Bill McTurdo, Donald Corbett-Munro, Mrs Pat Rait-Missile, Fergal O'Fenian

—the names of the alleged correspondents who featured in the letters page of the first edition of *The Angry Corrie*

Hillwalking and chess – What's the difference?

Bill Cook tells us…

DAVE HAD TWO CONSUMING INTERESTS in his life – hillwalking and chess (although not forgetting his fascination with statistics, which seemed to cover virtually every other human activity).

I thought that although TAC is a hillwalking fanzine it would be interesting to compare the two activities.

Unsurprisingly, chess doesn't get much of a mention in TAC as it is not exactly a high-altitude activity. You don't need to take crampons and an ice-axe with you when playing in the winter (unless you have a particularly aggressive opponent to deal with). Which makes me wonder – was Trotsky playing chess when his assassin bashed him on the head with an ice-axe in Mexico in 1940?

However, it should be noted (and I am sure that Dave will have been aware of this) that two British mountaineers played chess at an altitude of 6216m on Putha Hiunchuli in September 2024 – the highest game recorded by the *Guinness Book of Records*. They really did need ice-axe and crampons.

There is no comparable list in chess of Munros, or Corbetts, or Marilyns, or Hewitts, or… I think I've made my point.

You don't need to go outside to play chess, although in some Eastern European countries in particular you can see quite a few people playing in public squares.

Even in Stirling, in the summer months, there was outdoor chess organised by Dave (of course) with outsized boards and pieces in Kings Park. I'm sure it helped that Kings Park also has a Tump, so he could indulge both of his passions on the same evening.

Hillwalking is an activity which can be enjoyed by oneself, and Dave loved being able to take off to the Ochils on his own to take advantage of a fine afternoon (and maybe to try a new route). He also loved going with a small group as a more sociable activity, especially with good friends. He was able to keep up a conversation whilst the rest of us were struggling for breath on a steep path.

Chess, on the other hand, is not such a good solitary activity – you will appreciate that it is quite hard to conceal one's cunning plans from oneself!

An opponent is definitely required, and preferably someone with a similar ability. It's not much fun if your opponent is so much better that the game only lasts a few moves.

Unlike walking, where you can talk at the same time, chess is conducted in silence. In any chess club where there are serious games going on it is a mortal sin to start talking – you will be told very firmly to keep quiet. Any socialising has to wait until the pub and a post-mortem to dissect where you went wrong.

As already mentioned, Dave was both a keen walker and chess-player. Since Covid, chess probably became even more important to him than hillwalking, because in the months when there were restrictions on walking he could still play chess online. Quite a few new members joined chess clubs after having started off playing online.

So what is common to both activities? Statistics, of course...

There may not be lists in chess that are equivalent to the Munros, but every serious chess player has a grading, based on a system developed by Professor Arpad Elo in the 1960s. Grandmasters typically have gradings of around 2700, whilst an average club player might be around 1500.

Grading is based on results against other graded players and statistical probability so that, for example, in a game between two players with a grading difference of 100 it is probable that the higher-graded player will win at least seven or eight games out of ten. If outgraded by more than 500 points it is likely that the lower-graded player would never win or even draw a game. Some tournaments have special prizes for players who beat someone with a much higher grade.

How would grading apply to hillwalking? Well, Walkhighlands grades walks by their difficulty – from one "boot" being an easy walk on defined paths to five boots being an arduous one which

could involve scrambling. Dave's favourite hill, Ben Cleuch, merits three boots.

Climbing and scrambling also have their own grading systems to reflect the difficulty. Of course there is also keen competition among climbers in particular to achieve the hardest routes (and win bragging rights).

Climbing does have some affinity with chess in that both require considerable planning and forethought to achieve the required result. Being able to visualise patterns is useful in both disciplines. Maybe not so true with hillwalking.

Dave himself would have seen no problem in the two activities being intertwined. I had many walks with him when we would talk more about chess than anything else.

What he really wanted to do, though, was to organise a special chess tournament reserved solely for those who had completed the Munros. Dave's good friend Ken Stewart might have been one of the favourites to win [*see Dave's obituary for Ken on p18*]. Dave had already identified a fair number of compleaters who are also good chess players.

My own chess-playing skill would definitely not be good enough to win such a tournament (although I might be tempted to change the rules to only allow those who have completed two rounds).

Dave never got round to arranging that tournament, which he might well have won, but he never lost his love for both activities and continued both right up until he died.

The best of Inside

The front cover of *The Angry Corrie* always featured a white-on-black column to the right of the cover image, headed **Inside**, trailing the contents of the current issue. The listed items were brief, often involved puns, and sometimes made no sense at all until you read the article and went, "Ohhh. I see..."

The first **Inside** item listed for TAC1 was (perhaps surprisingly) **Against Munrobagging**. The second, setting the tone for what would occupy many issues to come, in one form or another, was **Shakespeare versus Glen Coe**.

Here are some more:

...Hillwalking opposed
(TAC6)

...Munro's Tables abolished
(TAC12)

...Wildlife schmildlife
(TAC27)

...Is it time to boycott Aviemore?
(TAC44)

...Rum, Gable, Schiehallion: overrated rubbish
(TAC54)

...St Kilda – the last wild sanctuary or a bit of a dump?
(TAC58)

...Snowdon? It's just a drive-up
(TAC78)

...134 Munros deleted at a stroke
(TAC69)

...What not to say on the hill
(TAC72)

...Beards – the truth
(TAC4)

...Amazing beard controversies
(TAC42)

...Beard necessities – why designer stubble won't do
(TAC64)

...The Electric Loch
(TAC12)

...Electric sea arches
(TAC26)

...The Electric Bank of Scotland
(TAC35)

...Glen Coe v Seb Coe
(TAC8)

...Psychopaths and cycle paths
(TAC16)

...WH Murray and WH Smith
(TAC35)

...Muriel Gray & Gazza – are they twins?
(TAC20)

...Muriel Gray in sheep protest
(TAC22)

...Sheep on almost every page
(TAC9)

...the sheep strike back: a woolly intifada
(TAC51)

...Get the flock out of here: sheep-napping on Skye
(TAC54)

...99s at 990m – it's an ice-cream van on Mullach Clach a' Bhlair
(TAC52)

...250cc at 3194ft – a mysterious motorbike on Ben Lomond
(TAC54)

Dave Hewitt – my memories by Perkin Warbeck

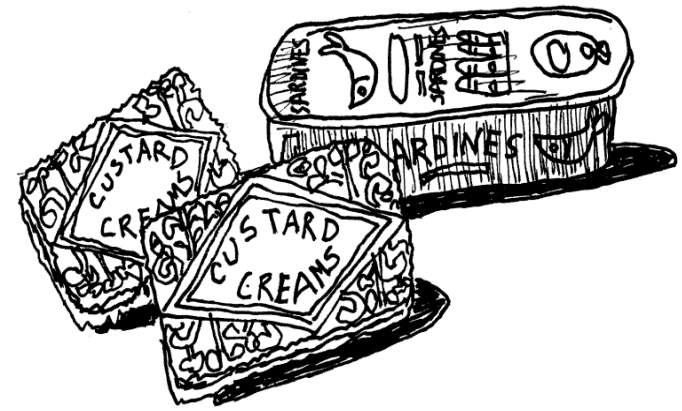
First encounter, Glasgow mid-80s

IN THE MID-EIGHTIES, I was involved in a local Glasgow project that placed kids coming straight out of children's homes in a supported-living house. This project was needing a new live-in worker. At a training event for another project, I was talking to a guy called Graham Aitken about this need for a worker. "I may know someone," Graham said. Portentous words, it transpired.

Graham was living in Aberdeen and said he would send this chap down for an interview. (It wasn't really an interview.) And thus, with giant steps, Dave Hewitt walked into my life.

He rather quickly latched on to the fact that I was a hillwalker of sorts and had a car. In a manner to which I would become accustomed he set about taking over aspects of my life, mainly hillwalking but also social.

He would turn up at the door a few times a week demanding tea, *The Guardian* and banter about the week's events. Often he would have with him a couple of samosas, purchased in one of his many favourite Asian carry-out shops. The housing project gave him a roof and a meagre stipend. I was always amazed at how little he could live on. Give him some sardines and a few custard creams…



The housing project duties allowed Dave to go hitching midweek – he wrote a paean to hitching in the first issue of *The Angry Corrie*. At weekends he would browbeat me into Munro-bagging.

After his stint at the project, he was gainfully employed at Stopover – a hostel for young homeless people. This possibly finally satisfied his mother's desire that he have a "proper job". The social workers there had no idea about IT, and Dave decided it would be a good thing if I created and maintained a database of the residents, to manage their interface with the benefit system, etc. It would never get past GDPR these days.

Dave would occasionally take staff or residents hillwalking. I recall an ascent of Ben Lomond where one young girl had an insult for every single person she met on the ascent. Some of them would "growl" back at her, as she described it.

Numbers

Dave was obsessed with numbers. Cricket scores – he could rattle off all the high cricket innings: Brian Lara 501, Don Bradman 452, etc. And all his hill summits, right down to the ones sensible people didn't count. He did a calendar round of Munros – a Munro bagged on each day of the year.

Glasgow City Council taxi licence numbers were bagged in ascending order. Trig points also bagged in ascending order of height. That one didn't go the full distance, but I do recall him persuading various chums to chip in on a boat hire to bag Lady Isle off Troon – 6m.

Eccentricity

He would attend rock gigs in full hillwalking clothing.

All his life he refused to own a camera – he thought it went against existentialism (or something). Paradoxically, he liked looking at photos, including ones I had taken of him.

He once heard that Jack Russell (not his real name) would urinate on a new pair of leather wicket-keeping gloves because in some weird way it cured the leather. Seeing Russell as an eminent source of expertise, Dave used to follow suit with each new pair of leather boots. I was sufficiently amused and appalled at this habit that I used it in at least two Murdo Munro cartoons.

Sport

He was interested in many sports, although he barely played any – in my decades, only table tennis and running. But he took an avid interest in cricket, football, athletics (including endurance / fell running) and rugby (a bit, he would accompany multiple-Munroist Robin Howie to Murrayfield).

He was an amazing table tennis player. He barely moved his feet, and he never played a backhand. He just stood there using his massive reach to play everything as a forehand. Loaded with top-spin.

Hillwalking

Dave Hewitt and I did much hillwalking together as a two-some. A lot of it was Munro-bagging, although I never aspired to completion. He was forever inventing connections between hills, and routes down that were not the same as the routes up. One would have to admit this last habit wasn't always endearing when there was a perfectly good path and we were elsewhere on scree or heather.

He was always fast – big long legs and years' worth of fitness in those legs. I was fit too, in those days – running, hockey, cycling, badminton – but he was always faster.

This was further exemplified in snow, because he weighed about the same as me – but had far larger feet by about four sizes. So he would float across the *neve* and I would plunge in. Once when we were doing a couple of Munros via the West Highland railway line, which involved catching a train at the end, he insisted that we visit some obscure bothy off on a side path. I still recall the sprint

back, him always ahead as we chased that last train.

Where I was able to take a rare lead was when it came to scrambling. The big man was not well disposed to it – partly because his long legs and arms pushed his centre of gravity out from the rock. But I am six feet two, so it wasn't only that. He was a bit fearty. On the Aonach Eagach, at a particularly tricky pinnacle, I took Dave's rucksack as well as my own to aid him in his teetering progress. On Sgurr Alasdair, in wet snow, he ended up taking the hands of both me and Linda, a person of barely five feet. This feartiness culminated in two rebuffs by the Inaccessible Pinnacle. I was pleased to be with him when he finally mocked that usurper.

Bagging

He was always knocking off Munros. But, because he was twice rebuffed by the Inaccessible Pinnacle, he downplayed the ultimate aim of completion. Other statistics, including who he climbed each hill with, are contained in his various computers dating back decades.

He was always rabbiting on about a battered piece of paper he had lost that enumerated some list of subsidiary summits. Goodness knows how subsidiary they were not to be logged on the computer. He was going to have a party if he ever found said scrap.

I remember a winter round of the three Munros of Beinn a' Ghlo, when we walked out in the dark for at least an hour – in plastic boots – because "You need the third one, Warbeck." He and I had done the first two previously – and I had shown zero desire in the meantime to knock off the third. As I drove home from Stirling, at about 21:00, I was probably muttering under my breath.

Likewise, I would never have done the seven Munros at Ben Lawers in a oner if it wasn't for you-know-who. On the summit of the last one, he asked of me and Ken Stewart: "Now – how shall we go down?"

"The easiest way," I demanded.

And of course there was Ben Cleuch. He was on 1753 ascents, and one of his numerical ideas was to "do his age" – i.e. get up it in fewer minutes than his years. I am not sure if that happened. The factors that went into a fast ascent were myriad – and all were considered.

The Watershed

In 2005, a man called Peter Wright claimed to be the first person to have walked the Scottish watershed. This was a disingenuous claim. Dave Hewitt had mapped, delineated and walked the Scottish watershed in 1987. And it is very unlikely that Peter Wright did not know this. Peter Wright was a good self-publicist and brought out a coffee-table book, appearing on television and in other outlets. Dave would only mutter about him, but I was incensed.

I created a *Wikipedia* page for the Watershed and one for Dave. I joined Wright's Facebook group in order to castigate him. His defence was always that Dave had chosen the wrong end-point. I am not enough of a pedant to care about Wright's justification for Duncansby Head versus Cape Wrath. I hold this truth to be self-evident – that the difference doesn't matter a damn. Furthermore, other people had walked the watershed in the interval between Dave and Wright. Lastly, Dave did it in a oner. Wright did it in a dilettantish weekend-outing manner. Doubtless dining on quail's eggs and lampreys.

Culture

He was widely read. I have never read any Anthony Burgess and probably never shall. Dave used to quote the first line of *Earthly Powers* off by heart: "It was the afternoon of my eighty-first birthday, and I was in bed with my catamite when Ali announced that the Archbishop had come to see me."

James Joyce was another. He would use Joyce's concatenation of words in his own writing, making up words like *legstretch*, for example. This was his morning walk.

He was a big Dylan fan. I think his favourite lines were:

A change in the weather is known to be extreme
But what's the sense of changing horses in midstream?

Or it might just be that we were always discussing the weather.

He loved the film *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. In his love of words, he would occasionally refer to any of our friends who were anxious as experiencing *The Unbearable Heaviness of Being*.

He loved Glasgow working-class culture and voraciously collected figures of speech and aphorisms. One of his favourites was "I was like that." It is very difficult to explain to non-Glaswegians how to use that phrase. Hand gestures may be needed. Another was *hingmy*, being a substitute for *thingummy*. He loved it when someone, referring to the film *Jaws 2*, called it *Jaws Hingmy*.

He had many encounters with the working-class youth of Glasgow when he lived in a high flat in the Gorbals.

Unfortunately the one that still makes us laugh out loud does not bear repetition.

Final Thoughts

I often say to Sheila, my wife, that long walks provide a level of conversation that literally does not happen in any other walk of life. If it is a long drive, one is interrupted by lunatics who should never have been given a licence. If one is playing golf, barely a proper conversation happens as one is forced to discuss preferred lies, shanks, gimmes. I could go on (*Ed— Don't*). If one is watching the TV... well, that is self-evident.

Now – in later years – a lot of my walks with the hero of this edition produced no conversation at all, because he was 100m in the distance (and increasing). I was somewhat gratified (if that is the correct word) that, at his funeral, two better walkers than I admitted to the same effect.

But in our peak years I could keep up with him, and we had so many wide-ranging, obscure, humorous conversations and encounters, that we dined out on them for decades.

Once in the Inverbeg Inn after something on the Arrochar Alps, we were engaged in conversation by a man in full evening dress. He kicked off by asking where we had been walking. We came up with the hills and he came up with: "In that case you were on my land."

We were somewhat amused by this, but were prevented from asking for verification as he continued, "You may wonder, lads, why I am in full evening dress?"

"Well, yes."

"I am a Grandmaster in the Masonic Lodge and am on my way to a function in the Albany Hotel, Glasgow."

The number of times Dave and I alluded to this possibly exceeds the times he told me I was lighting my Trangia in the wrong manner.

Another one-liner that comes to mind was when we were "doing" Ben More and Stob Binnein. I like to think we looked something like hillwalkers. We met two guys who had already done the latter and were on the way down. As is the way, we enquired – somewhat disinterestedly, because we were bound to make our own decisions – as to the conditions.

"Well – it's up to yourselves of course lads, but it is pretty tricky."

Needless to say we proceeded and it wasn't too tricky.

But for decades we would come up with that one-liner to each other – "It's up to yourselves of course lads."

And it would not need to be about hillwalking. We would accumulate quotes from our elderly mothers, who would be surprised if they were greeted by a "lady doctor".

Every day – quite literally – in the weeks since his untimely death, I can't count the times I have thought about mailing him about some point of mutual interest or humour. Every day an item or quote on the radio, something from the Ashes in far off New Holland, comes up that I would have mailed him about. That is the reward of 100-plus hill outings, various camping trips and endless hours in my kitchen. It is irreplaceable, and I thus welcome the chance to share it here. There is no-one else who shares that common backlog that comes with all those days on the hill or in the kitchen.

My fondest memory is being on the rope when he finally slew the impostor that was the In Pinn. Even though he got annoyed with me dancing around taking photos at the belay when he was still a little anxious.

In a three-way email exchange between the Ed, Perkin Warbeck and myself last year, some lyrics from the *Eagles* song "Take it Easy" came up in conversation:

> *Well, I'm a-standin' on a corner in Winslow, Arizona / And such a fine sight to see*
> *It's a girl, my Lord, in a flatbed Ford / Slowin' down to take a look at me.*

There ensued a pause just long enough for data to get to Cambuskenneth and back, before the Ed remarked, "The Winslow Girl!"

And then: "If TAC was still going, we could do ***Ten Differences between Terence Rattigan and the Mam Ratagan***."

To me, that sums up so much about Dave. Quick-witted, well-read, a lateral thinker to the point of perpendicularity, and always mindful of E.M. Forster's injunction from *Howards End*, "Only connect!" which he would quote approvingly as a journalistic maxim.

And, of course, he also embodied Forster's original meaning, through the network of friends he created around himself.

—GH

Darkness on the Edge of Town by Andy 'Prospect' Mayhew

> My own entry in the bothy book contained, along with the usual details, remarks on loneliness and readiness to go home […] night is always darkest in the hour before dawn.
>
> —Dave Hewitt, *Walking the Watershed*

On day 67 (or was it 66?) of my Long Walk – Saturday 11th March, 1989, at around 4pm, to be precise – I finally arrived at Knockdamph. And that was where I first met Dave Hewitt. Not that he was actually there at the time. In fact, he hadn't been there for several years, and, probably, has never been back since. And I didn't know who he was, anyway.

But I noted his comment in the bothy book. And how we were experiencing similar emotions at a similar stage of a not-entirely dissimilar journey towards Cape Wrath. And so I jotted down in my journal:

> *Entry from Dave Hewitt on walk along Scottish watershed. His 70th day and longing for home in much same way I've been.*

And that was that. Two lonely ships passing in the night, years apart. Never to meet again. Or so I thought.

But a couple of years later, browsing in Nevisport in Fort William, I came across a peculiar publication called *The Angry Corrie*. It was printed on nice, soft, lightweight paper making it ideal for carrying in, along with kilos of food and fuel, to a bothy. And, at a pinch, could also be used for lighting a fire. Or even as toilet paper. Neither of which, I hasten to add, were things I ever did use it for. But always nice when you find something has multiple purposes. Especially when it only costs 50p.

In those days I was living in Ipswich, and for some strange reason, TAC wasn't available in my local WH Smith's. So I took out a subscription.

I'd been wanting to get into outdoor writing for some time. I did contribute three chapters to a book on *Walking Britain's Coast,* but they were rather dry, descriptive, and even back in those days I wanted to try a bit more humour. TAC provided just the outlet I needed. I could write a whole pile of complete nonsense. And Dave would publish it! Okay, so I didn't get paid, and to be fair, I am sure, had Dave received more contributions, he'd never have had to publish my silly stories. But hey – that's my article there, in print! I'm a real writer! Yippee!

Over the years, TAC provided a great deal of mirth and frustration – the latter coming exclusively from the ever more fiendishly difficult annual quizzes which did, at least, ensure I was (in those pre-internet days) a regular visitor to the local library. Meanwhile I responded with tales of bothy conspiracies, Cairngorm mysteries and the ever-expanding Very Inner Hebrides. Never made it to a blank square though.

The only time I met Dave to speak to properly was at the TAC tenth-anniversary shindig held at Laggan Village Hall. Which I can vaguely recall definitely did happen. Although what actually happened is a bit more blurry...

By the time Dave came to write *Walking the Watershed* we knew each other – through correspondence – well enough for him to ask me to help with some proof-reading and particularly, due to my involvement with the MBA, the references to bothies. So any mention of a bothy in the book that is in any way incorrect, misleading, or simply shouldn't really be there at all is entirely down to me.

Not sure exactly when or why I stopped contributing to TAC, although its publication was becoming more sporadic and eventually it sort of faded out. A bit like an old rock band that never officially broke up, but its members just sort of drifted away to do their own thing, always with the thought that maybe one day they might get back together again. It continued to exist as an idea, just not appearing in public any more.

By now the internet had taken off big time (one of the reasons, I suspect, why TAC faded away) and, the MBA being some thirty years behind the times, I was the only MBA officer using it. So Dave continued to correspond with me on MBA matters and bothies in general and even bothies in private. Probably because bothies were about the only things I really knew about. But even that became less and less over time.

And so I never did get around to explaining how Bruce Springsteen – that, at the time, still quite lively rocker – had clearly grown up in a small tenement in Paisley, just along from the Park where he'd occasionally hang out with his purple buddy, The-Artist-Still-Known-At-The-Time-As-Prince. (What? You didn't know he was Scottish as well?!) The Boss's many songs clearly hark back to those halcyon days when he was *working on a dream* of escaping those Renfrewshire *backstreets* and finding his *beautiful reward* at his favourite bothy, a real *mansion on the hill*, beyond the *darkness on the edge of town*.

I've no idea whether Bruce ever climbed Ben Cleuch, whether he ever met Dave or whether Dave even liked Springsteen's songs. But I hear that Dave Hewitt climbed Ben Cleuch over 1500 times. That's crazy! I haven't even been to Tesco that many times. (Imagine if Ben Cleuch did Clubcard points!) Was that what inspired Springsteen to write one of his greatest songs? I guess we'll never know. But the words seem appropriate...

> *Tonight I'll be on that hill 'cause I can't stop*
> *I'll be on that hill with everything I got*
> *Lives on the line where dreams are found and lost*
> *I'll be there on time and I'll pay the cost*
> *For wanting things that can only be found*
> *In the darkness on the edge of town*
>
> —Bruce Springsteen, "Darkness on the Edge of Town"

The Mystical —♌♂ Dr Dreich ♀♍— offers you his…

Hill Horrorscopes for 2026

Aries (March 21 – April 19)

♈ A stepping stone may prove treacherous in April. Carrying dry clothing, a wrist splint and a basic medical kit would be prudent. Unexpected contact from a previous acquaintance will finally explain those urinary symptoms.

Lucky *Landranger* map: Sheet 58

Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

♉ You may pop up and tap the top of the Bolster Stone this year, but abandon all thought of standing on top of it, if you value your life. Your suspicion that the staff at the dog rehoming centre have lied to you will be proved beyond doubt by March.

Lucky adverse weather condition: Sleet

Gemini (May 21 – June 20)

♊ An unusual constellation of GPS satellites in July will cause problems towards the middle of the month, making it difficult for the Mountain Rescue Team to respond to your distress. Ferry cancellations will complicate your life for the entire summer.

Lucky hill food: Sardines

Cancer (June 21 – July 22)

♋ That gas canister you think is empty is not. Avoid replacing it by candlelight. In the autumn, your neighbour's leaf blower will continue to blight your early Sunday mornings. Violence may make you feel better briefly, but not in the long term.

Lucky soft tissue injury: Anterior cruciate ligament strain

Leo (July 23 – August 22)

♌ That dangling gaiter strap you have been ignoring will cause trouble on steep ground. You should register with a dentist if you have not already done so. Your social media history, no matter how innocent, will suddenly become a focus of worried interest among those close to you.

Lucky BBC weather presenter: Louise Lear

Virgo (August 23 – September 22)

♍ In June, drink only what you have brought with you to the bothy. The yellow liquid in the bottle at the back of the high shelf is not whisky. The keyless entry fob for your car will prove difficult to locate during the entire first week of July.

Lucky navigational technique: Sky polarimetry

Libra (September 23 – October 22)

♎ A companion's inability to pronounce a Gaelic hill name will lead to confusion and an unplanned night on the hill. An "AI assistant" you did not know you owned will start to order Eastern European grocery items on your behalf in August, and will prove difficult to dissuade.

Lucky off-road parking location: Glen Roy

Scorpio (October 23 – November 21)

♏ You should avoid fish paste sandwiches for the entire month of May, or carry a larger than usual supply of toilet paper. A sachet of oral rehydration salts might also be of use. In June, HMRC will discover a source of income you thought you had declared a decade ago.

Lucky bird defaecating on your head: Grey heron

Sagittarius (November 22 – December 21)

♐ You will get into a pub dispute over the "correct" summit of a notoriously complex hill. The focus of this argument will prove difficult to explain to the attending police officers. Those unexpectedly high electricity bills will finally be explained if you look in the loft.
Lucky named storm: Kylie

Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)

♑ The smell your hill companions complain of will be explained only if you *completely* empty your rucksack. In December, antiterrorist police will visit your house after a call from someone who mistook you for someone else. They will not accept liability for the damage to your front door.
Lucky dehydrated meal: Chicken korma

Aquarius (January 20 – February 18)

♒ You should start thinking about your choice of new tent now. You will never see your present one again after the end of April. Your new biometric passport contains someone else's details. Homeland Security will be unsympathetic at best.
Lucky Gaelic hill name: Buidhe

Pisces (February 19 – March 20)

♓ Walking poles will prove problematic. If you have one, it will betray you. If you do not have one, you will need one. The structural survey on your new house will prove to have been negligent. The surveyor is living under a new identity in the Turks & Caicos Islands.
Lucky number of hill companions: Zero

Are you human, or are you bagger?

To find out you can calculate your *bagger quotient*. To do this, take the number of ascents for a hill list that count towards completed and current rounds, divide by your total number of ascents of hills in the list, and multiply by 100. So, for example, suppose you have completed one Munro round, and were 100 hills into your second, but your total number of Munro ascents was 450, your quotient would be

$$\frac{\mathbf{282 + 100}}{\mathbf{450}} \times \mathbf{100} = \mathbf{85}\%$$

You can calculate a different quotient for different lists, or you can combine them all into a single figure. Now see how you measure up as a bagger:

- More than 97% – you are a dedicated bagger. You won't climb a hill that isn't a "tick" unless you really have to. You may refuse to go on the hill with your friends unless they follow your bagging agenda.
- 90–97% – you are a regular bagger. You are very focused on ticking, but don't mind the occasional repeat *too* much.
- 70–90% – you are a pretty normal hill-goer. You are counting your ticks, but you also just go out in the hills for its own sake.
- 50–70% – you are not a serious bagger, or perhaps you are a lapsed bagger. You are just out climbing hills and aren't making a determined effort to complete the list.
- Less than 50% – you are a bagging outlier. Perhaps you are deliberately avoiding completion of the list or, like Dave with Ben Cleuch, or professional guides, you keep climbing the same hill(s) over and over again.

(This is based on a UKC thread from 2012 (tinyurl.com/9wnb6hdj), in which I suggested the idea, and Dave seemed to like it. He of course provided his own stats, and made a guess at who might have had the lowest quotient at the time – Ian Douglas with 7.8%!)

Mark Bull

Dave on losing a friend

DAVE LOST A GOOD FRIEND when Ken Stewart, a frequent hill companion and fellow chess-player, died while they were climbing Beinn Tulaichean together in 2018. He wrote a typically eloquent tribute to Ken in *Scottish Chess* magazine. It's reproduced here, with the kind permission of Chess Scotland, and is all the more poignant now that we've lost Dave, too.

Most people reading this will only have known Ken Stewart in the context of chess – where he was an accomplished player (2100 strength in his day) and a noted arbiter and administrator. Ken was, however, one of those people with multiple interests, each of which he pursued to a high standard. This was the case with his academic work and teaching career (at Bell College in Hamilton, now part of the University of the West of Scotland), with his knowledge of meteorology and astronomy, and with his golf – he was off low single figures for many years, good enough to play in the Scottish Amateur Championship. And it was certainly the case with his hill-climbing, a hobby which Ken adopted with considerable enthusiasm and no little ability in the second half of his life.

Perhaps surprisingly, given how much he went on to do, Ken was a late starter on the hills. If asked when he began, he would tend to say: "At age forty, when I stopped being any good at golf." He remained good at golf well beyond that age (and played his last nine holes at his beloved Drumpellier, close to his Coatbridge home, the day before he died), but it was at forty that he evidently stopped feeling he could play at a properly competitive standard and was thus in need of a new pastime – and a new challenge. Until then the only significant hill Ken had climbed was Arthur's Seat, but on 9 April 1983 he reached the top of Lecket Hill in the Campsies and on 19 June 1983 came his first Munro: Ben Vorlich above Loch Earn. And with that he was away – there was no significant interruption to his hill activity (mainly in Scotland but with forays into northern England and very occasional visits to Wales and Iceland) during the subsequent thirty-five years.

More people in the Chess Scotland grading list have completed a round of the Munros – the Scottish 3000ft hills – than might be guessed (Stirling B in the Central League has three such players in its current five-board team, for instance), but few have been round all the Munros twice. Ken managed this, finishing first on Beinn Iutharn Mhor near Glen Shee in September 1994, when he was aged fifty-two, and repeating the feat on Carn Dearg near Newtonmore in glorious weather in July 2010, a few weeks before his sixty-eighth birthday. Both completions saw just a small number of friends in attendance – Ken was not one for big gatherings or lots of fuss – and there was subsequent discussion as to which of these two "teams" would win were they to meet in a chess match. (Probably the earlier, given that IM Bryson was present that day and Ken himself was a stronger player in 1994 than in 2010.)

There was never any intention of a third round – Ken rather resignedly accepted that the ageing process did bring some limitations – but he kept heading to hills and in all climbed more than 1000 Munros. It wasn't just Munros, though – he completed a round of the Corbetts, the next Scottish category down, with a summer-evening ascent of Ben Vrackie in July 2004. There were also two rounds of the unfashionable Donalds – Scottish 2000-foot hills south of the Highlands – with the finishes coming in November 1999 and in April 2015.

Being a mathematician both to trade and at heart, Ken liked a good list – he climbed over 800 Marilyns (British hills requiring at least 150 metres of ascent) and was quietly proud of having reached the top of more than 2200 Tumps – hills with just 30 metres of ascent, but including many obscure and rough summits that increasingly seemed to keep him busy during the winter months once the rigours of soft-snow slogs and chilly winds on higher things became a bit much. But he really just loved being out, and many expeditions to small hills incorporated long low-level walks. He was fond of Bar Hill and Croy Hill near the Forth and Clyde Canal, and had a great love of the Ochils, having visited every minor summit and making his 219th and final ascent of the high point, Ben Cleuch, as recently as 6 October 2018.

Ken had had heart-related problems for the past few years, but while this limited him to some extent – that soft snow and those cold winds – it wasn't something the casual onlooker would have noticed, as he remained very steady uphill and out-and-out brisk in terms of trotting back down. He was nineteen years my senior and had considerably shorter legs, but even to the end – for example on his final successful outing, a very pleasant day on Ben Venue in the Trossachs in early November – he had a habit of pulling away on the downhills.

He used an angina spray to good effect in later years, and although his sudden death came as a consequence of the heart issues – he collapsed just below the top of Beinn Tulaichean, a Munro west of Balquhidder – he was still full of hill-related plans and ambitions. As we headed up the lower slopes on that final day, I asked Ken about his plans for 2019 and he told of having booked, or being in the

process of booking, five full weeks of hillwalking with the Holiday Fellowship and other organised groups. These would have been quite heavy-duty holidays even for someone half Ken's age, and given that it exceeded his normal three or four weeks away it seemed to mark, if anything, a deliberate step up. When asked about this, Ken said (with his customary mix of slight world-weariness and determined enthusiasm): "Well I suppose I should do what I can while I'm still able."

Ken was undoubtedly a strong walker and a bold scrambler, particularly during his fifties and sixties. He did plenty of winter stuff with axe and crampons, and while it might have seemed slightly odd for someone so competent to go on guided holidays (he was almost always the most experienced client, and more than once served as a useful "extra guide" when situations became difficult), the organised trips allowed him to achieve various hard and committing things that he wouldn't have attempted alone or with a less brave companion such as me. There were ascents of Tower Ridge on Ben Nevis and North Buttress on the Buachaille with guided groups – both serious undertakings – plus four ascents of the Inaccessible Pinnacle on Skye and various winter gullies in Kintail and elsewhere. The guided holidays also provided Ken – a shy but sociable single man – with just the right level of companionship.

Aside from these guided trips, much of what Ken did on the hill was alone – he was very competent and confident in his own ability – but he also climbed a considerable number of hills with a handful of regular sidekicks of whom I was one. Ken and I did an enormous amount together and it almost goes without saying that I'll miss him hugely. We first got to know each other through chess, at Polytechnic Quickplays (Ken organising, me playing) in the late 1980s. Once he took early retirement from Bell College we began climbing hills together, starting with an Ochils outing in August 1997 and continuing very regularly until his death.

We had over 250 days out, including plenty of long ones – for example in the Cairngorms and in Fisherfield – especially when he was tidying up his second round of Munros. Overall, we climbed 161 Munros together, had eighty-three (!) joint trips up Ben Cleuch, and did masses of other things besides. Oddly, given that we both spent a lot of time in the Lake District (Ken was two-thirds of the way through the Wainwrights when he died), every outing we ever had was in Scotland. Vague plans for a Cumbrian meet-up never quite happened, although we often compared notes on ideas and routes down there.

Quite what makes a good hill partnership is mysterious, but Ken and I seemed to work and I can't recall a single cross word or significant disagreement during those twenty-odd years. I learnt an enormous amount from him – he was common sense on legs – and he provided much quiet help and encouragement in terms of my own hill ambitions. For my part, I seemed to bring the right level of hill companionship, and usefully – being the younger half of the partnership – I was happy to do the bulk of the driving in the later years. The format, time and again, was that Ken would drive from Coatbridge to Bridge of Allan, where I would collect him for the Highland leg of the day before returning him to his car come evening.

That had again been the intention on that last day in mid-November, and when he didn't make it down from Beinn Tulaichean the evening drive home with all of Ken's stuff in my car, but no Ken, was one of the saddest hours of my life. One must focus on the happy and good memories, however, more so than the poignant ones – Ken, ever the pragmatist, would surely have argued the same. He was one of my dearest friends and I'm just thankful – along with many other people in the chess, teaching or hill worlds – to have been able to spend time with, and to have learnt much from, such a kindly, thoughtful and accomplished person.

(First published in *Scottish Chess*, December 2018)

More Inside:

...McNeish marketing: Wilderness Walks reviewed (TAC31)

...Do you copy? TAC looks at Mr McNeish's strangely familiar books (TAC51)

...Positive words about McNeish shock! (TAC66)

..."A very satisfying crash..." – after 20 years, the fate of the Sgurr nan Gillean gendarme revealed (TAC71)

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...Taking the Glen Muick? – a £2 fee for Lochnagar (TAC50)

...Silk Cut at Sourlies, Marlboro at Melgarve ... what now for bothies under the Scottish smoking ban? (TAC68)

...A vital resource, or too big for its boots? The MCofS discussed (TAC65)

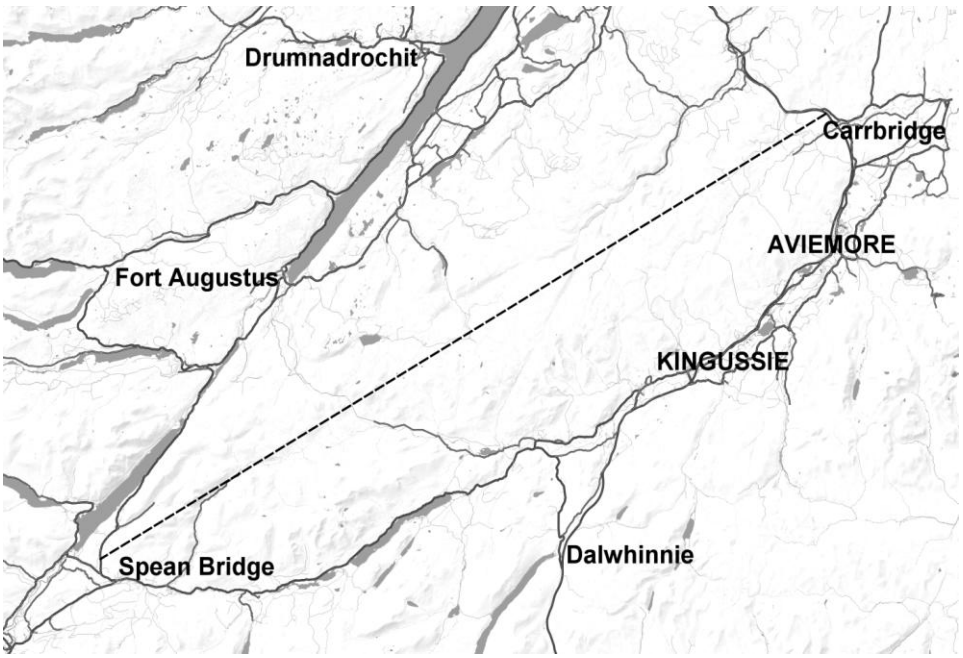
The Straight and Very Narrow by Val Hamilton

"THE LONGEST STRAIGHT LINE in the UK without crossing a road." If ever a topic cried out for TAC coverage, this was it. The account of this walk, undertaken by father and son Jonathan and Sam Bellarby in April 2025, was yet another fascinating event in the Boat of Garten Winter Talks series which has been running since 2003. Over the years since I started attending in 2009, so many of the talks would have made perfect TAC material, but by then publication had tailed off.

The first talks were organised to raise money for a new village hall and continued after the Community Hall was completed in 2007, with the principle remaining that speakers were not paid and all money raised went to hall funds. There were many big names – Andy Nisbet, Sandy Allan, Di Gilbert, Hamish Brown, Martin Moran – but many more talented and intrepid locals covering trips to every continent, as well as speakers on local and natural history.

TAC featured a couple of times. David "Heavy" Whalley usually mentioned TAC in his idiosyncratic and very funny mountain safety talks including the one he gave at BoG. It was more of a surprise when, in November 2024, the Cairngorms National Park Authority Chief Executive, Grant Moir, brandished a copy. He quoted from a 1999 piece about the funicular by Sean the Revelator. (Anyone care to own up? I asked The Ed at the time, but he couldn't remember.) And then of course there was Peter Wright on his Watershed walk. I sat through this tense and raging and asked a question about his failure to credit previous Watershedders, notably Malcolm Wylie. Some fudged answer is all I can remember.

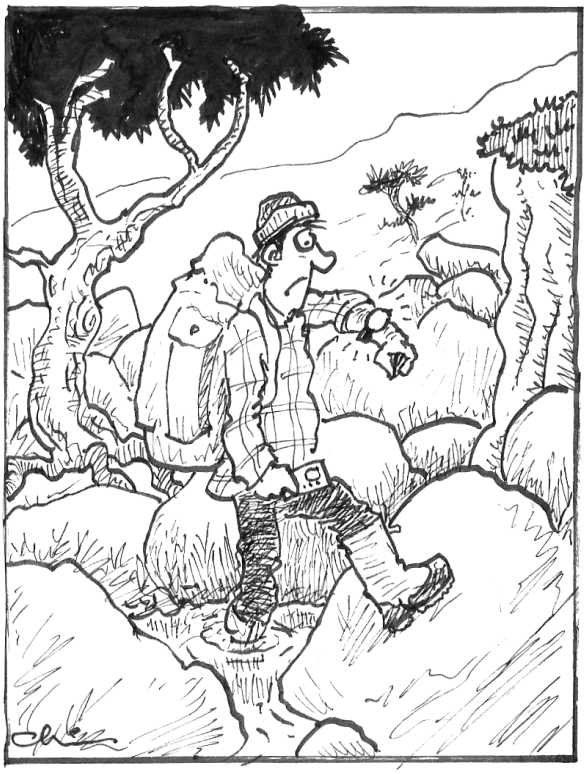
The Winter 2025 season started with Alex Moran describing the Island Munros Triathlon, a thirty-two-hour epic climbing all the Munros on Skye, then cycling to Lochaline, a carefully timed swim across the Sound of Mull, and finishing on Ben More. The Longest Straight Line talk followed a few weeks later. The idea came from a question on the Ordnance Survey Twitter feed in 2018. The OS took on the query and proposed a line running for 71.5 kilometres through the Cairngorms from the A9 north of Drumochter to the A939 south of Corgaff. In 2021 Calum Maclean and Jenny Graham accepted the challenge and their account can be seen here: tinyurl.com/4eb584jd. At the end of their walk, Maclean and Graham found that what the OS had classed as "a road navigable by a car", based on the OS MasterMap Highways road network, was in fact only an unpaved track.



This was partly what led Jonathan Bellarby to look more closely for an alternative farther north with the condition that, for him, "a road" had to be surfaced. He identified a slightly longer (78.8km) route through the Glen Roy and Monadhliath hills, starting on the A82 near Spean Bridge and ending on the A9 north of Carrbridge. The details required some tweaking, especially to avoid the long dead-end road which runs down Glen Roy. This was where they carried out their only reconnaissance, to check exactly where the tarmac ended at Brae Roy Lodge. Beyond this, preparation for the trip was limited to working out how little they could manage to carry. Their gear included a tent which was waterproof if it didn't rain. Their main sustenance was bargain flapjacks – three for £1 from Home Bargains. (The Ed would have appreciated that.) Jonathan's biggest mistake was, as he

put it, to wear trail shoes on a route with no trail. Sam fared better in walking boots through the extremely rough terrain.

They plotted the route using GPS and gave themselves a tolerance of ±50 metres from their straight line, with a GPS watch alarm sounding if they deviated 20m. Jonathan started out with a map and compass but gave up very quickly and both found themselves glued to the GPS to the exclusion of enjoying the views and the pleasures that map-reading can give. How different from the Ed's Watershed wandering in pre-mobile-phone days. After the first day, the alarm seldom went off as they disciplined themselves to extreme straight line walking usually in horrendous conditions: tussocks, bogs, dense forest, steep traverses. The few yards on a windfarm track were a highlight. The trip took them four days and rarely sounded enjoyable but the account was gripping and funny.



The pair spoke in turn as a well-honed double act and the presentation was professional with great photos and animations of the route which were very impressive to this low-tech walker (map and compass woman, me) Another memorable addition to the BoG Talks series, though I don't think anyone present would consider repeating any of these dire straights.

(Map contains OS Open Data © Crown copyright and database right 2018)

A Digital Cartographical Pendicle…

The Ordnance Survey website makes a clear distinction between a **road**, "a metalled way for vehicles", and a **track**, "an unmetalled way that is clearly marked, permanent and used by vehicles". Why, then, did Maclean and Graham find themselves on "only an unpaved track" when they reached the end of the Ordnance Survey's "longest straight line"? We need to dig a bit deeper into how the OS classifies "ways" in their massive dataset: "A road is defined as a metalled way for vehicles. A vehicle is defined as one with wheels on both sides of its body. Metalling is defined as any artificial (man-made) surface including areas of asphalt, concrete and gravel." So the OS dataset allows for **gravel roads**.

Maclean and Graham were, in fact, standing on a section of the old military road, which stayed south of the Don on its way to Corgaff Castle and the Cock Bridge. The modern A939 is on the north side of the river at this point, so they were still a kilometre or so away from a tarmac surface – but standing on, according to the Ordnance Survey's dataset, a gravel road.

Specifically, the old military road is classified as a Restricted Local Access Road – a designation that's more commonly applied to service roads for reservoirs and windfarms, long driveways of country houses, and gravel roads laid down by shooting estates. The Bellarbys' "tarmac-to-tarmac" route crosses a number of such gravel roads (including the old Corrieyairack military road), and so was invisible to the Ordnance Survey's data search. **—GH**

The "Outlets" list in the first edition of *The Angry Corrie*:

> possibly Tiso, Nevisport, Highrange (Glasgow), Marshall (Aberdeen), Strathclyde Programme Shop, 136 Renfield Street, Glasgow.
> Also at various well known Highland drinking emporia, under wee stones at the top of selected hills, & in good rubbishbins all over Scotland.

Hello ChatGPT. I'm on top of Ben Macdui in thick mist. I can hear footsteps following me, and can glimpse a large humanoid shape through the mist from time to time. What should I do?

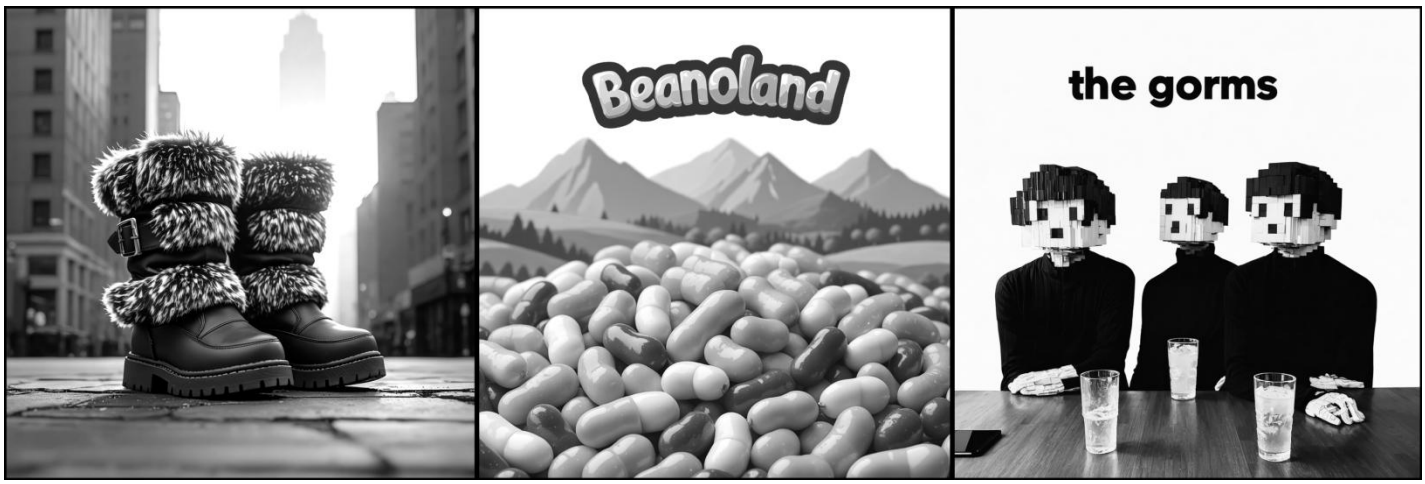
> What you're describing matches the well-known **Ben Macdui "Fear Liath Mor"** (the Grey Man) experience – a combination of echoing footsteps, atmospheric acoustics, and the unsettling effects of mist, isolation, and fatigue.
> But regardless of folklore, **you should treat this as a real-world mountain safety situation**, not a supernatural one.
> Here's what to do:
>
> 1. Stay calm — what you're experiencing is common on Ben Macdui

There followed some reasonable advice about getting off Macdui in poor visibility, so that was nice. And we were impressed by ChatGPT's ability to spot the Big Grey Man's looming presence, and the fact it prioritised calm, rather than urging full Collie-esque flight, "blindly among the boulders for four or five miles".

Encouraged by ChatGPT's grasp of Scottish mountain lore, we popped over to Stability AI's Dream Studio, and fed it with the prompt **Big Grey Man of Ben Macdui**.

It got the idea that this scenario was going to involve a large grey man amid mountain scenery, but seemed quite keen on heroic statuary with hills in the background.

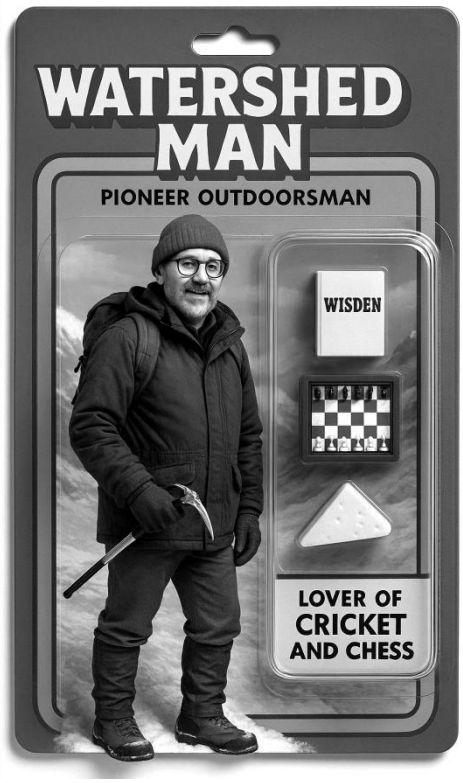
So, of course, we then deliberately ignored all the rules guiding the use of generative AI, and fed it some of TAC's more obscure turns of phrase, without further prompts. **Furryboots City** predictably produced some furry boots and a city entirely unlike Aberdeen. **Beanoland** precipitated a scene out of *The Lord of the Rings*, but featuring a pile of some sort of hybrid of jelly bean, real bean, and antibiotic capsule – so almost indistinguishable from the real Dundee, then. But our favourite was **The 'Gorms**, which generated an album cover for a band resembling the Beatles during the 1960s, but made of Lego and dressed by Steve Jobs. And with the usual AI-generated Funny Fingers.



Perkin Warbeck, no stranger to the engineering of prompts for Generative AI, was swift to respond to the availability of ChatGPT's **Action Figure Generator**, which offers the following opportunity:

> Turn yourself into a photorealistic flat-pack action figure in blister packaging.
> Create your own action hero with accessories, style, and packaging color.

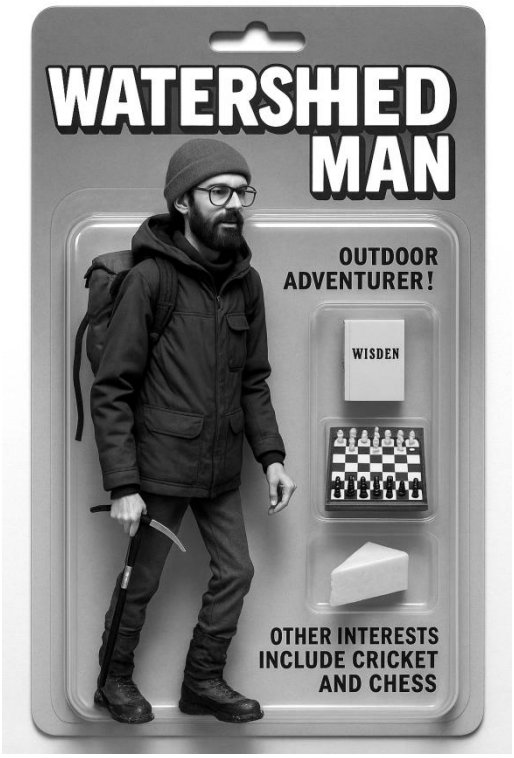
On being provided with a reference photograph of our Esteemed Ed, and the responses to a simple structured questionnaire (and with some undisclosed expenditure of electrical power and coolant in a server farm on another continent), ChatGPT was offering to turn him into an action-figure toy. How could anyone resist such an opportunity?



And so Warbeck set about the task. But ChatGPT seemed not to register one of the defining features of the Ed, well-presented in the reference photograph. The first result was about as unlike the Ed as a bearded, bespectacled person could possibly be. Compare and contrast the genuine article with the... well... *fuller-figured* **WATERSHED MAN**, at left.

Some iterations then followed, involving repetitions of the phrase, "No, no – he is much thinner than that."

And so it went on, culminating in the figure at lower left, whose head now pokes improbably out of his packaging, but which still doesn't capture the majesty of the original.



But, as if still yearning to add some extra width, somewhere, ChatGPT provided this new **WATERSHHED MAN** with a letter of the alphabet unknown to either English orthography or the Unicode Consortium – perhaps some sort of typographical variation on the Funny Fingers Problem of Generative AI.

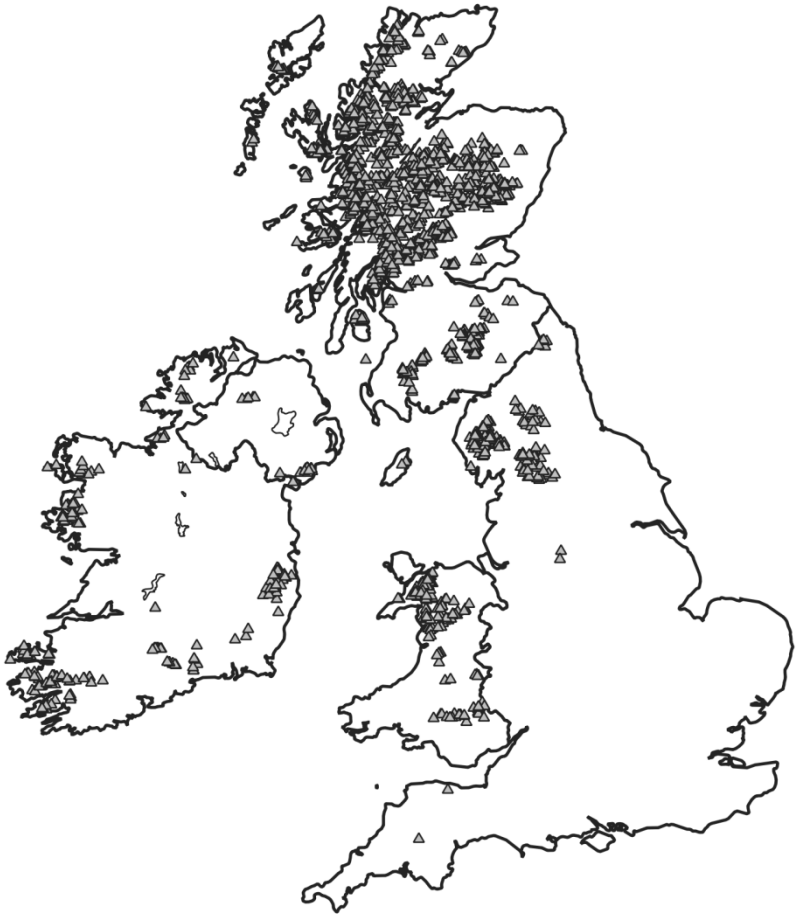
The Ed himself, when confronted with this action figure set, quickly objected to the 7x7 chessboard accessory, which makes the "white on the right" rule trivially easy to achieve, but otherwise would mess up the game quite a bit.

Are you puzzled by the cheese? Warbeck reveals all:

> *... before his subsequent obsession with sardines, in the pockets of his jacket he carried custard creams in one pocket and a lump of cheese in the other. Between hillwalks these did not come out, so the jacket could be a bit ripe.*

(*Photo Credit:* **Perkin Warbeck**)

Dave and the Docharties



In 1948, William McKnight Docharty completed his Munro round and turned his attention to other hills.

The upshot of that decision was a book, privately published in December 1954, in a limited edition of 500 copies: *A Selection of some 900 British and Irish Mountain Tops*. The core of that list comprises 726 mountains and tops with heights between 2,500 and 2,999 feet. To this he added: 142 summits "Of interest under 2,500 feet"; some 3,000-footers in England, Wales and Ireland; and some of the more prominent 2,500–2,999-feet "tops" of these 3,000-footers. The total came to 933 hills. A two-volume Supplement followed in 1962, also privately published in 500 copies. It updated and augmented the original list, and added details of 896 Scottish, English, Welsh and Irish hills in the 2,000–2,499-feet range, as well as 126 "Of interest under 2,000 feet".

As private publications go, these are astonishing objects. Gold-embossed hard covers in cream dust-jackets, each boasting *two* silk bookmarkers, illustrated with numerous black-and-white photographs including fold-out panoramas – many of these stretch across seven gatefold sheets, and are pieced together from up to twenty component prints.

The opening words to the 1954 volume are:

> *Rather than allow these Lists to lie fallow, it has been suggested they might be of interest and use to friends with whom it has been my privilege and pleasure to walk the hills. In the hope, therefore, these friends may care to accept copies, I have had this very limited edition printed to offer as mementoes of comradeship on high ridges and wind-swept plateaux.*

"Lie fallow"? The Scottish Mountaineering Club had published *Munro's Tables and Other Tables of Lesser Heights* in 1953, bringing together the classic Scottish lists of Munros, Corbetts and Donalds for the first time. Surely they would be interested in Docharty's list?

Not necessarily.

Below, Dave gives us the benefit of his research in the SMC archives. [The text has been lightly edited to expand and repunctuate some of the more telegraphic passages in the original email]:

When I had my big extended session reading through the Munroist, etc., letters in the SMC archive (this was around twenty years ago, so some details are a bit fuzzy), from time to time I'd come across internal notes from SMC bigwigs written on the bottom or in the margins of letters. Quite often these were of the sniffy/superior variety, concerning baggerish types, particularly the really keen ones. Anyone interested in Docharty's lists was liable to be subject to this attitude, also with Corbett's work. The word *Corbodocharties* (I think that's how it was mostly spelt) tended to be bandied about concerning such hills and those interested in them.

Quite how much this translated into actual sniffiness whenever Corbett or Docharty turned up at an SMC event, I don't really know, but there are hints of it – more in a figure of fun kind of way – with various Corbett-related accounts in SMCJs. Corbett was quite active at meets, Docharty less so, I think. But the point in retrospect of course is that with WMD being an SMC member they could have been more enlightened and asked to add his "Grahams" list to

the canon, along the lines of how Percy Donald's work was incorporated in the 1930s. Corbett's work was only added after he died, of course (and the Club appears to have lost the papers, very frustratingly), and they also carved off the Scottish bit of his work when there's a pretty strong case to be made (as is done by some Rucksack Club folk) that it should be seen as a whole, e.g. Pillar and Cadair Idris are proper Corbetts, rather than Furth things.

I've no idea whether they ever approached Docharty about this – I suppose they could have done, but I suspect it's unlikely, and I didn't ever see any correspondence about it in the main SMC files or in WMD's amazing little notebooks. But if his work had ended up being added in, say, the mid-1960s, the Club would have saved themselves a world of subsequent trouble. There are certainly some people around who know the background to all this and who tend to refer to the 2000ft–2499ft hills as Docharties.

Here are the basics I have in my notes re Docharty:
Born: 1895 or 96
Died: 4/7/68, age 72
Funeral: Linn Crematorium, St Mungo Chapel, Lainshaw Drive, Glasgow, 18/7/68
Obituary: *SMCJ* **29:** 215–6
Was in the Alpine Club, SMC
Houses: La Belle Place, Glasgow / 17 Huntly Ave, Giffnock (from at least 11/51)
His daughter Catherine continued to live in the Giffnock house until she married in the early 70s; there was some connection with Mrs Mairi Sawyer, died 6/52 – daughter of Osgood Mackenzie (WMD kept obits)
Finished his Munros: 31/5/48 on Aonach Beag (Nevis) and on Stob Coire Bhealaich (same day)

Finished his Scottish Corbetts: 20/5/60 on Meall an Fhudair. That's the first definite completion, although it's fairly likely Corbett himself did complete in the late 1930s or during the early part of the War, plus there could well have been other unknown early completions – Colin Dodgson, however, who "did all of Docharty", didn't finish the Corbetts until 1975.

When I had access to WMD's books I took advantage of his useful habit of recording his ascents in print to try and work out a minimum Marilyn total. I can't offhand find the figure I ended up with, but from memory it was in the mid-500s – I've got a vague idea it was 560ish, but of course there could have been other unrecorded hills as well, especially in the gap between the third book and his death. It wasn't quite enough to get him into the Marilyn Hall of Fame, anyway.

WMD is listed as Munroist no.13, but that's a very inexact science. There's one definite pre-him unlisted completion (James Gall Inglis), and at least two fairly likely ones – the journalist James Cameron and Molly Fitzgibbon; she would have been first woman if so. Plus possibly others.

The only other known 1948 completion is by William Douglas McKinlay – I don't know when/where this was, but given that Eric Maxwell listed him after WMD it was probably after May 1948. Oh, and WMD completed some form of the Furths list in 1949 – I don't know quite which hills that involved (although it could presumably be worked out from the notebooks), as it was some years before David Maxwell (Eric's son) published his list of such things.

The higher Aonach Beag is an unusual completion Munro. When my Munroist research petered out around 2017/18, by which stage I knew where roughly 80% of listed rounds ended and also lots of unlisted ones, I only knew of seven finishes there. There was a 19-year gap to the first one after WMD – by my friend Andrew Fraser, 9/9/67 – the first of his five rounds, all of which were completed in different decades. Aonach Mor by contrast is popular – at least 60 finishes there, although none known pre-1989.

(Map: Natural Earth www.naturalearthdata.com
Docharty gpx file: Ronnie Bowron, www.haroldstreet.org.uk)

Over the years, the Letters page of *The Angry Corrie* went under a whole variety of names, but always avoided the word "letter"...
until, that is, the pun value of **Letter You** made it absolutely unavoidable

Braes Beefs, Crag-Rat Chat, Bothy Banter, Goretex Girning, Hilluser Havering, Cairn Chat, Rambling Rhetoric, Glen Ponder, Hill Informed, Meall Beag Mailbag, Letter You, The Angry Inbox

(Dave would go on to reuse **Hill Informed** as a title for his column in the Outdoors section of *The Scotsman* newspaper)

Dave Hewitt – Recollections of hill days over thirty-six years

by Mike Adam

I FIRST MET DAVE for a walk up Ben Vorlich by Loch Earn, with "Little Dave" MacLaren at the very beginning of 1989.

Setting an early precedent, the taller Dave persuaded us to go a different route from normal, via an adjacent Corbett. (This, I soon realised, was a tendency by Dave – there was often a sub-agenda to our hill trips, not always mentioned beforehand. But something Bill Cook and I learned to expect and accept.)

Despite being so sociable, if not on his own, he preferred walking in small groups of two, three or four. I think that he found this more personal – he was never a formal hillwalking club person. A high proportion of his hill walks he did alone, but still recorded meticulously – particularly timings, scribbled with a pencil on scraps of paper (typically old envelopes), backed up by sometimes fairly lengthy emails and analysis.

He always waited patiently for his small group to catch up, except maybe for the last 200 metres of an ascent, when he tended to clasp his hands behind his back, put his head down, and power his way to the summit.

When in larger parties, he liked to do his own small variations to the route or plan – even on others' Munro round completions, including my own on Beinn Udlamain, eight years ago, when he went walkabout, fitting in an extra Munro ascent on the way to the top.

When organising big events, predictably they often fell foul of the weather. This applied to his "big double" in 2007; the completion of his first round of Munros, coincident with his 1000th Munro ascent (on the Saddle in Kintail). This had involved careful preparations by Dave to make sure it worked, and that he didn't inadvertently climb an extra Munro beforehand.

In recent years we have taken advantage of the improved weather forecasting, which has led to some truly excellent days in the hills and mountains. But if the weather was iffy and there was need of getting out, Ben Chonzie was generally the choice of local Munro. We did have some good days there – but some foul ones too, in gusty winds which could bring us to our knees. I even recall on one occasion having difficulty with placing my feet due to a vole scuttling in front of my boots, seeking shelter from the howling wind and snow.

Dave retained a particular affection for the Crianlarich hills. In April last year, we climbed Cruach Ardrain once again, on a fine day (by yet another new route). At the top, we met a group of walkers of mixed ages from a well-known walking club from the west of Scotland. True to form, Dave engaged them in conversation, and he was asked if he had done much hillwalking. As usual, and to my slight frustration, he responded very modestly, to which I said, "Well Dave, not many people have a category of hills named after them." At which the leader of the group cried, "You must be Dave Hewitt!" and made a deep bow to him.

Dave had a consistent and literally well-worn fashion sense on the hills – which was quite similar to his alter ego, Murdo Munro. Ron Hill running trousers were doubled up in winter time, though unsurprisingly (given his height) they still had a tendency to be too short in the leg, and on at least one occasion aroused a toot and a ribald comment from a passing van driver as we walked back to the car. He also specialised in two-storey headgear, a cap with a woolly hat on top, a practice which I soon copied in indifferent weather conditions. His caps had almost always been retrieved from some obscure path on the lee side of a mountain following a windy day, sometimes by him, but often by his great friends and climbing partners in the Lake District, Gordon and Tony.

In terms of his hill fare – I have to say a tin of sardines for lunch on the top of a windswept hill never really appealed to me, but I was always happy to share the occasional cut-price almond croissant he had searched out from Waitrose on his way to Monday-night chess at the club.

But as you know, it wasn't all about Munros – far from it. He had developed a deep affection for the Lake District, through his partner Tessa who came originally from Coniston with strong links to its Mountain Rescue Team, and from the annual gatherings with his family in that area too. He targeted the Wainwrights, principally with Gordon and Tony, and he had his completion day in 2018, on Catbells. And, astonishingly for a long-planned event, it was beautiful weather that day.

As already mentioned, the Ochils, and Ben Cleuch in particular, were very special to him – as was evident from his "Visitor" notes on the back of the Harvey's map of the hills. He loved the variety of old routes that he could explore, and hardly anyone could pass him without being engaged in a conversation. A few days before he died, he completed his 1783rd ascent of Ben Cleuch (over 1500 of which were on his own).

The last time I climbed Ben Vorlich with him was earlier last year. It was the 103rd time he had climbed the hill, and even more remarkably and appropriately for that

year, it was his 2025th Munro ascent. He appreciated that. And at his suggestion, we climbed it from a new approach – just as we had thirty-six years before.

Now we are left with so many happy memories – and statistics! He was such a great and knowledgeable companion – not only on the hill, but in conversations in the many hours of shared travelling, and back home after each outing.

He savoured even a typically dour November day at the end of last year, up Stuc a' Chroin, leaving me once again well in his wake, until he paused to let me catch up with him. I never imagined it would be our last hill together, nor his final Munro ascent. He was in fine form, and on the walk back out he was recalling the challenge and pleasure of interviewing Ian Botham for *The Scotsman* newspaper, while they were doing what sounded like a forced march at six miles per hour in Botham's marathon charity event, just before the Millennium.

And he was still in fine form on his last weekend, a couple of weeks later, when I saw him for the final time.

But most of all we'll miss his personal qualities: his thoughtfulness, encouragement, modesty, kindness, good humour and generosity – he really was a Gentle Giant.

Dr Ben MacDoohey, of The Angry University, answers your Hillwalking Queries

Thirty years ago (TAC23), I asked you to explain why there were 277 Munros, and you came away with some twaddle about Greeks and Bertrand Russell. There are now 282 Munros. How do you justify your previous comments? **—Tom Bowie**.

How marvellous to hear from you again. I see that your belligerent and superficial approach to matters of deep physico-mathematical philosophy has not moderated with the passing years.

The Greek of whom you speak was Aristarchus of Samos (*c*.310 – *c*.230 BCE), who first expounded the *Principle of Numerical Utility* – that there is no reason for an integer to exist unless it *counts* something. This so-called *Aristarchus Principle* became increasingly salient as science found physical relevance for more and more of the integers, until by the 1950s a function had been found for every integer less than about a billion – *except* for 277. Bertrand Russell around that time notoriously proposed that 277 should simply be omitted from the number line.

It was therefore with immense relief that mathematical science greeted the elevation of Beinn Teallach to Munro status in 1984, providing utility, at last, for the number 277. But the subsequent publication of the Bearhop revision to *Munro's Tables*, in 1997, caused shockwaves to reverberate through the scientific community. It is said that Stephen Hawking himself wrote a pleading letter to the Scottish Mountaineering Club in advance of its publication, but no trace of this letter can now be found in the SMC archives. Make of that what you will.

Fortuitously, the crisis in science was soon resolved by a chance discovery relating to another question I was asked in the same issue of TAC, though Anne Castile exhibited considerably more courtesy than yourself. Her question related to what are informally referred to as *MacLeod's Tables* – to give them their full title, Dinsdale MacLeod's *Tables of Mountains which Bear an Amusing Resemblance to Everyday Objects* (1892). The flat-topped Healabhal summits near MacLeod's native Dunvegan were renamed "MacLeod's Tables" in his honour, but he is essentially unknown outside of his native Skye.

All editions of this slim work were believed to be lost as a result of a campaign of book-burning by Presbyterian ministers, responding to the "obscenity" of the section dealing with "Bosoms and the Male Parts", and Queen Victoria's public "revulsion" on finding out the meaning of *Meikle Pap*.

But in 1999 a copy was found. All but the frontispiece had been bound into the back of a late edition of John Cleland's *Fanny Hill*, discovered concealed within a wall at Clairvaux Abbey during renovations. The tables proved to list exactly 277 summits. Science was saved, and the Munros count proved to have been a red herring. This is how our knowledge of the Universe progresses.

Eds on the Ed

WHILE DAVE WAS ALWAYS "The Ed" in these parts, he also worked for several other publications over the years. Below, three of The Ed's Eds recall working with him: **Bob Smith** (*grough*), **Robert Dawson Scott** (*The Scotsman*), and **Stewart Kirkpatrick** (*The Scotsman* and *Caledonian Mercury*).

Bob Smith

We never actually met; our communications were always by email, but Dave was a giant, literally and reputationally.

He was an irregular contributor to *grough* magazine and was supportive of our online publication from the very start of our online journey.

His encyclopaedic knowledge of the outdoors and dry humour, along with the ability to turn a witty phrase – "grizzled wisebeards" and "a striking combination of plaited ponytail, green Welsh kilt and glamorous blonde assistant" – always made for interesting copy.

His subjects for us included the curious overuse of crampons, the ups and downs of Munro surveying, and a warm obituary of another unconventional mountain giant, Irvine Butterfield.

His keen sub-editor's eye occasionally spotted errors in our writing but his suggested corrections were always made with a good heart. Our numerous email exchanges were always cordial and, despite us never meeting face-to-face, I considered him a friend and valued fellow journalist.

His *Angry Corrie* hillzine always took a comfortingly irreverent approach to outdoors matters, and Dave always posted a copy to me.

Robert Dawson Scott

As a relatively enthusiastic hillwalker myself (I did finish my Munros but took up rowing after that on the grounds that, generally, it was on the flat), I first encountered *The Angry Corrie* on the counter of some outdoor shop in the Highlands. Like everyone else, I warmed to its irreverence, its quixotic obsessions and the wealth of information it contained. I soon came to enjoy the in-jokes (the Plain of Albion somehow tickled my fancy) and, as a professional journalist, to recognise how exceptionally well-written and produced it was. Who were these guys? I reached out to Dave, just in appreciation, but many here will recognise that writing to *The Angry Corrie* often quickly turned to writing for *The Angry Corrie*.

However it wasn't until I took up a full-time post at *The Scotsman* in 1997 that I began to agitate for an Outdoors section for the paper. It seemed to me that throwing the kids in the back of the 4x4, piling whatever bit of gear you fancied on top and belting up the A9 on a Friday evening was more or less standard practice among a substantial group of its well-upholstered readers, certainly in the Central Belt. And since all that gear had to be acquired somewhere, maybe advertisers might like it too.

It took a while but when the late Alan Ruddock as editor green-lit the idea, my first call as editor of the new section was to Dave. With all the arrogance that national newspapers seem to generate, I assumed he would jump at the chance. TAC readers will not be surprised to learn that he was much more circumspect, politely interested but full of pertinent and detailed questions. When I finally managed to pass that test and got him into the building, his first call was to the small but well-stocked research library the paper used to have (Google had only just arrived and *Wikipedia* was still to come) to see if it was up his standards. The availability of a full set of Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 maps was the clincher.

I wish I could supply you with tales of journalistic derring-do in our time together but honestly it all worked very well. I wanted Dave to write a regular column, of course, for which he invented the title *Hill Informed*. But having someone who knew how to put a publication together, someone who understood deadlines, timings, pictures, the gentle art of chasing contributors and all the rest of the heavy background editorial lifting was a joy. He was also a source of great ideas, not just on hill-walking, and of course had a network of contacts which was second to none. Some of them were even prevailed upon to contribute from time to time. It is probably not for me to say how brilliant it all was, but it was pleasing to note that other publications – notably the *Herald* and

some of the Sundays – very quickly copied it, so it must have had some value to it.

As it happened I was quite quickly moved on to be head of content at *scotsman.com*, the paper's early attempt to access the new digital space. Frankly, it was about as successful as all the subsequent attempts, which is to say not very. But by this stage Dave and I had become good friends and went on to share many outdoor days and much tea in Cambuskenneth. He duly came to that Munro compleation of mine in 2016 (on Lochnagar, since you ask) as I had to his in 2007 and I was very pleased that he did.

Stewart Kirkpatrick

Many will remember Dave as a giant of the hills or a forensically detailed writer on the same. For me, though, he will live in my memory as the epitome of the sub-editor's craft. As a former sub myself let me state that it is one of the purest expressions of journalistic skill to take someone else's words and polish them without losing tone, personality, or meaning.

To borrow an adjective often applied to climbing equipment, Dave was simply bombproof. He subbed many, many pieces for the *Caledonian Mercury*, being a lynchpin of the online paper. Each and every time he delivered what was needed, to deadline, at very high quality, accompanied with the odd sardonic comment. He correctly identified that my own pieces contained what he termed "the statutory typo". I insert one hear [*sic*] in honour of his memory.

I first encountered Dave in the late 1990s when I was handed the features baton at *The Scotsman* (a slippery object which had a *Lord Of The Rings*-esque habit of escaping the hands of those holding it…) The inimitable Robert Dawson Scott had got Dave involved in writing on the outdoors for the paper. And I was delighted to continue that. In my career I've encountered many fevered egos with an unjustifiably high opinion of their skill and knowledge. Dealing with Dave could not have been more different. Always polite, always wry and amusing, he wore his expertise lightly but authoritatively, and delivered his copy with consummate professionalism and no drama.

Dave also witnessed the bizarre turn of events which saw *The Scotsman* turn away from its traditional audience and embark on an unsuccessful bid to become the Scottish *Daily Mail* (a title held then and since by the actual *Scottish Daily Mail*). On seeing this, and the resultant bolt for the door of seasoned and talented *Scotsman* staffers, he uttered words which stand as an epitaph for the paper: "All very strange and sad."

When I and some colleagues launched the *Caledonian Mercury* (an online newspaper) in 2010, Dave was one of the first people I called. Despite the wing-and-a-prayer nature of new media ventures, he was enthusiastic and very quickly became a stalwart of the enterprise. As well as writing inventive, thought-provoking, and occasionally whimsical pieces ("Should bicycle bells be compulsory?"), he also threw himself into subbing duties with enthusiasm, dedication, and breathtaking attention to detail. The Caley Merc went on to be shortlisted for major awards and won one. More importantly, it garnered a large and enthusiastic audience. Dave was a huge part of making that happen.

So impressed was I by his subbing that when (during that period) I got involved in producing a major paper's north-of-England business supplement, I called on Dave once again. As ever, he was totally reliable and utterly professional. I relied on him enormously and he never let me or our colleagues down. He could also be counted on to be wryly amusing about some of the less-than-fascinating pieces which passed through our hands.

As I said, many will remember Dave as an outdoorsman or a writer. That is right and proper. As for me, I don't know if they have newspapers in heaven, but if they do, I know who should be on the subs desk.

More Inside:

...Balmoral moved to Loch Einich! (TAC24)

...Make your lungs pass urine (TAC29)

...Rotting vegetation spiced with steaming cowpats (TAC30)

...Breeches beyond your wildest dreams (TAC32)

...Tertullian and the Teletubbies (TAC33)

...Cartographical asylum and latitude sickness (TAC32)

...Some sad, perverse, huffy people (TAC35)

...More Feshie goings on (TAC34)

...No no: "Airy spheroid", not hairy spheroid (TAC48)

...Vox Pox: an outbreak of opinions on foot and mouth (TAC50)

...Maltitude sickness: whisky-baggers galore (TAC52)

...North Björk Moors (TAC40)

Dave and the Reclaimers by Graham Benny

2001 was a momentous year for the hillwalking community. Foot and Mouth Disease gave farmers, land-owners and managers *carte blanche* to close down most of our outdoor spaces – unless there was profit involved, as in ski slopes and golf courses.

By the middle of Spring, the disease was under control and we were allowed to get out on the hills again, except the landed gentry thought the restrictions suited them fine and they would prefer to keep them. The best of them dragged their feet on reopening but many were bold enough to try and maintain their closures.

Unfortunately they had underestimated the hill-going community, especially the TAC readership, and Dave in particular. He kept us up to date on *Scotland Online* and provided observations and Vox Pops in TAC49, 50 and 51. Most importantly, though, he was the main driving force in assisting the tardy land managers to reopen access. Perhaps they were just too busy to take down the "Keep Out" signs, but some of the encounters made it clear that they wanted to maintain their closures against the official guidance. A couple of these confrontations verged on turning violent – I missed the Cruachan one, but a couple of weeks later we were involved in the Battle of Auch.

Reports had reached Dave of West Highland Way walkers being subjected to hassle when trying to pass Auch, and the glen was completely blocked so it was an obvious target for our attention.

We met up at the Green Welly in Tyndrum, and fortuitously there was a police presence checking up on a rally of bikers. Dave let them know what we intended and showed them the relevant documentation. They were fine with our plans, but since Auch was not within their jurisdiction they gave Dave the direct number to call the Oban police if need be.

First we had to remove signage and covers on legal signs at the West Highland Way access at the road summit above Tyndrum. As we removed more misleading bumf at the turn-off into the glen we heard shouts from the cottage on the other side of the river, and about two minutes later a 4x4 drove up behind us as we headed towards the farm and the glen. The driver was an aggressive thirty-something farmer type in a rugby shirt who started to harangue us in spite of us showing him the current documentation. Pretty soon another 4x4 arrived from the farm, driven by an older but equally aggressive guy and we became the meat in an angry sandwich. As things got a bit more heated one of the estate guys threatened to call the police at which Dave volunteered the Oban phone number. As they mulled over this curveball, Dave started to take photos of them and their vehicles. It seems now that the camera is mightier than the sword, so they both reversed off and we were able to continue, suddenly unhindered.

Once under the railway viaduct we split into different parties for Beinn Mhanach, Beinn Dorain, and the Corbetts south of the glen. On the way up the wet glen towards Mhanach the name "The Reclaimers" emerged, and we adopted it for the remainder of the campaign and applied it to our previous actions. We regrouped on our return to pass the farm mob-handed but this time we only encountered an old guy and a toddler playing beside the track. "Did you have a nice day?" we were asked, in complete contrast to our earlier "welcome".

The guerrilla campaign continued with decreasing intensity for a couple of months as the remnants of bad signage got removed. On my way up to Skye at Glasgow Fair Weekend for the Glamaig Race we spotted signs at the Achallader road-end and duly removed them. On our return they had been replaced but after we again removed them I suspect the resistance crumbled.

We had a habit of retaining the removed signs as trophies, and Dave proposed a triumphal exhibition of our collection but was not able to find a suitable gallery.

The Reclaimers' war was won, but a greater prize presented itself. The nascent Scottish Parliament was deliberating over our "freedom to roam" tradition, which had only tenuous legal foundations. Many MSPs and their advisers were hill-goers and outdoor enthusiasts – probably a good few were TAC readers – so they would have been aware of the landed-interest folk's recalcitrance, and even their downright defiance of renewed access. Any proposals to allow farmers and land managers to self-police were abandoned as the necessity for The Reclaimers' actions had demonstrated they could not be trusted. A proper framework for "reasonable access" was enshrined in law as the *Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003*, with legal definitions set out in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

So remember, each time you are out and about in our precious countryside, that your access rights were fought for and consolidated through direct action by your peers – and offer up a quiet thank you to Dave Hewitt for his commitment and influential input to the cause.

LACHLAN and the ED by Grant Hutchison

LACHLAN AND I WERE CLATTERING steeply down off The Law, and we were so busy watching our feet that we didn't notice the man at the foot of the hill until we were almost upon him. Tall, lean, bespectacled and bearded, he was smiling benignly up at us, very evidently waiting for us to clear the path so that he could make his ascent.

"Easier going up than going down," he rumbled sympathetically, as we drew level with him. His voice was deep and mellow, and he was *very tall indeed*.

"We've never been on this side of the Ochils," I said, smiling ruefully. "Wouldn't want to come down this way again. But, on the upside, climbing Ben Cleuch has possibly cured our Ochils phobia."

The tall man looked quizzical. *Ochils Phobia* was evidently an alien concept to him.

"You see," I elucidated, "we got avalanched once, farther north—" (I gestured helpfully northwards) "—when we were barely out of our teens, and we've never been back. A real unreasoning fear, I suppose."

"Too right," growled Lachlan, shaking his head. "That weird 'Munro in the Ochils' thing. *And* my first car was written off by the snowplough." Then he glared at me. "*And* I still haven't got a new set of dangle dice off you, man."

"Wait," said our new friend, in astonished tones. "Wait. An Ochils Munro? An avalanche? *Dangle dice?* I know this story!" Then a look of bemused concern washed over him. "Actually, I've *proof-read* this story!"

We eyed him with mild concern.

"Yes," he went on, animatedly. "You thought you'd discovered a Munro in the Ochils, and then got avalanched in a storm on the way down. But wasn't there once some sort of automatic distress beacon built out of a palm-top computer, a mobile phone and a fax modem? And... And didn't you also invent the *Bionic Long-Johns*?" He sounded simultaneously delighted and incredulous.

"That was me, man," said Lachlan, a touch sullenly. "That was all me. The boy here just tagged along."

"Then you must be Lachlan McLachlan!" Dave declared.

"McLoughlin," said Lachlan, nodding wearily. "People get that wrong. A lot."

"Sorry. Sorry. I'm Dave," said the tall man, offering Lachlan a very large hand to be shaken. "I... um... thought you guys were fictional."

Lachlan and I simultaneously stood up a little straighter and squared our shoulders, in what was probably a subconscious effort to appear less fictional.

"And so *you*," Dave continued, turning in my direction, "must be the Unnamed Narrator!"

"I have a name—" I protested.

"Yes, but," Dave continued, "we never get to *know* your name. People address you as 'man', or they forget your name, or someone interrupts them before they can say it! It's a narrative trope. It keeps happening."

"But I do—"

"*Anyway*," interjected Lachlan, already pining for attention. "Cleuch's a nice wee hill. Have you been up it at all?"

Dave gave a wry smile, suggestive of some secret amusement. "I've been up it a few times, yes. It *is* a nice wee hill." And then he gave a slight start. "Speaking of which, I need to get up and then be off again fairly soon. Chess tonight."

He glanced at us in turn, radiating a mixture of pleasure and puzzlement. "I have to get on," he said, in regretful tones. A pause. Then: "Take care."

He turned, and began to pick his way rapidly uphill, placing each foot with practised ease.

"He's done that before," said Lachlan. And, after a moment's reflection, "Seems like a nice fella."

"He does," I said. "He does."

"But wasn't that funny, that thing he said about no-one ever saying your name?" mused Lachlan. "I've never thought about it before, but that really happens, man. Don't you think that's weird? And him knowing about it?"

"Just shut up about that," I said.

And Lachlan, unexpectedly, shut up about it.

Dave was always generous with his time and expertise. Below, **Mike Dixon** shares a piece that was first published in the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal* [*SMCJ* 47/210 (2019), pp10–15], which is reprinted here with their permission. Mike reports receiving Dave's enthusiastic input during the draft stages.

Getting the DTs by Mike Dixon

THE NATION WAS JITTERY. There had been recent terrorist attacks in the UK. I was in a pub in Chester talking hills with a friend when another suddenly butted in with an anguished expression. "Stop. Listen. Is that a bomb I hear?" We froze. Then he smiled: "No, it's the sound of you two ticking."

Hill lists are infectious; many people succumb after initial derision. Some feel embarrassed by their obsession and remain closet tickers. Hamish Brown recalls that in the early days when very few had completed the Munros, some sheepish baggers concealed their *Munro's Tables* in brown paper. Recently I was visiting a friend and while he was answering the phone I skimmed through his Grahams book on the coffee table. It was full of added ticks, dates, initials, symbols, coloured shapes and shaded-in areas. You'd have needed to be Alan Turing to decode what all this meant. When my friend returned he grabbed it off me as though I'd discovered his most intimate diaries.

It's the sanctimonious ones who get me. Those who decry the lists (but secretly tick them) and imply they're engaged in a worthier activity, are hill connoisseurs, and only climb those with real merit or on a whim. There is nothing serendipitous about doing Beinn Fhionnlaidh north of Carn Eighe in the Affric hills. If they've done that one then they're tickers, period, no matter how they try to dress it up. At the other extreme, one chap arrived at a summit in Perthshire and introduced himself by the three-digit number he was given by the Clerk of the List to confirm his Munro completion. A tsunami of Scottish mountain facts and personal hill statistics poured forth from him. His life seemed to be defined by ticking hills and was mapped out for several years ahead. His dogs were called Beag and Mor. At least they had personalities and engaged in eye contact.

My own interest in the lists was fairly typical: once hooked, I didn't see beyond the main Munros. Munro Tops were dismissed unless they were particularly interesting and didn't entail too tedious a diversion from the main peak. All those on Skye, in Glen Coe and Torridon and on peaks such as An Teallach were worthy of climbing, regardless. Several I thought about but when it came to making the effort I usually had a CBA moment. Despite being very close to Beinn Cheathaich, a Top of Meall Glas northeast of Crianlarich and which even has a trig point, I just Couldn't Be Arsed. The same thing happened on the Top of neighbouring Sgiath Chuil the same day. Most Tops I wasn't aware of anyway.

Corbetts replaced Munros and then Grahams replaced Corbetts, but I always felt I'd missed out on several Munros by doing them in poor weather. Furthermore, several were worthy of extended exploration to fully appreciate their complex but magnificent structure, The Saddle, Sgurr nan Ceathreamhnan and Beinn Eighe being just a few examples. And so the Tops and a second round of Munros resulted in a most satisfying combination tied strictly to good weather. Cruachan's Taynuilt Peak, the arrowhead of Stob Coire na Ceannain in the Grey Corries, the Lancet Edge and Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair's remote eastern tops in Fisherfield were favourites from this period. In Knoydart, Sgurr a' Mhaoraich Beag provided a sensational view down Loch Hourn.

Yes there were wearisome diversions which contrived to mess up a natural round. A' Chioch, a top of A' Chralaig above Cluanie, has a name which suggests shapeliness but in reality was forgettable except for the exhausting fight against fading daylight in deep snow. Lochnagar's Meall Coire na Saobhaide provided an epiphany for one companion. One glance at the detour to attain this uninspiring-looking point and he abandoned any further interest in the Tops. We split up quite early that day to do our own things, and met back at the car. At least we shared the petrol money.

I thought I'd finished for good in 2008 until I bumped into a friend who dropped a bombshell when he asked if I'd included all the deleted ones too. This is what he'd done – in fact everything which had been in the history of lists of Munros and Tops. I could detect a dismissive sneer at my just having kept to the current list. The internet duly provided the list of Deleted Tops. DTs – the abbreviation has a telling suggestion of addiction about it. Pleasingly I realised I'd done several already, innocuous bumps *en route* to Munros or Tops, while others had become Corbetts. Despite originally being subject to an error in height assessment, less than 3000 feet but not a Corbett, Faochag in Glen Shiel needs no excuses; its marvellous shape so aptly named.

A few DTs were the result of height-assessment mistakes, allocating the wrong bump to Top status when it should really have been a nearby one.

Unsurprisingly I hadn't visited these, or if I had I couldn't be certain and had to return to make sure. Several were trivial but proved to be surprisingly good viewpoints such as Creag Leachdach of Cairn Bannoch perched on the edge above Glen Callater. The northwest Top of Ben Lui affords a fine close-up of the Central Gully. In the past it was a favourite spot to snap men in tweeds and alpenstocks plodding their way up the gully, whereas I watched someone in garish clothing finish it, then unstrap a snowboard and reverse the route to the corrie floor in under a minute.

Some mountains were a real pleasure to return to. Wandering around Ben Avon's plateau to visit its satellite tops and tors gives access to the greatest natural sculpture park in the country. Several of its finest features don't even reach 3000 feet or feature in any dreary inventory – and are so much the better in consequence. It's a clear reminder not to take lists too seriously.

Then there was the realisation that an awful lot of remote hills would need a revisit. Beyond the northeast Top of Mullach na Dheiragain there was a DT, and also one beyond Sgurr nan Ceathreamhnan's West Top. Use of a mountain bike up Glen Elchaig became the neatest way to tackle these and appreciate the sprawling majesty of the group.

Tom Dubh in the Moine Mhor of the Cairngorms, a swelling in a bog surrounded by much higher fare, is for many one of the greatest jokes in the Tables. The prospect of returning to visit similar esoterica nearby means that at times you need a sense of humour for the glorious wackiness of this quest.

The Cairngorms are particularly well endowed with DTs that are inconsequential lumps and pimples, though there's nothing trifling about the distances to reach them. I'm smiling as I write this, not because I'm reminiscing about especially stellar days I had on them; more at the poor bastards who'll have to visit the remote DTs of An Sgarsoch and Carn Bhac. Pure *schadenfreude*.

One DT has grown in popularity almost incidentally. Sron a' Cha-no, a mile-and-a-half northeast of Cairn Gorm, must have had more visitors in the last few years than in the whole of the rest of time, due to the development of a handy and popular winter climbing crag perched above Strath Nethy.

The really nerdy DTs were where the original grid reference was incorrect and didn't reflect a summit or bump no matter how slight. The friend who put me on to the DTs had warned me about this and with a knowing smile said I'd have to stand on these points to properly tick the list. This is not something most would admit to doing. He told me that on one occasion he'd come across somebody doing the same, both wearing embarrassed expressions. It was a lovely moment when they confessed to each other, had a hug and realised they weren't alone in their odyssey.

Meall nan Ceapraichean above Gleann na Sguaib has such a situation, where the original grid reference for the Top Ceann Garbh was far out from the actual position. Without a GPS I got as close as I could work out, then covered the ground in a circular sweep just to make sure. Placing a few stones would have been a bit sad. I was with someone who resolutely refused to make this diversion – he took the piss mercilessly as he headed off for Eididh nan Clach Geala, muttering about OCD and the autistic spectrum. Some day an academic at the University of Rutherglen in the Irvine Welsh School of Scottish Studies will produce research on personality types and serious hill bagging.

Nothing lasts forever. I'd seen the final DT for years while travelling over the Kessock Bridge to work. Sgurr na Lapaich stands regally in the west: come down its right-hand northeast ridge and there is a small but definitely noticeable bump. It was classic Scotland, with the deer and Scots pines in Glen Strathfarrar, and the hills looking double their height under a winter mantle. By then the reward was accentuated by the fact that I no longer needed to work.

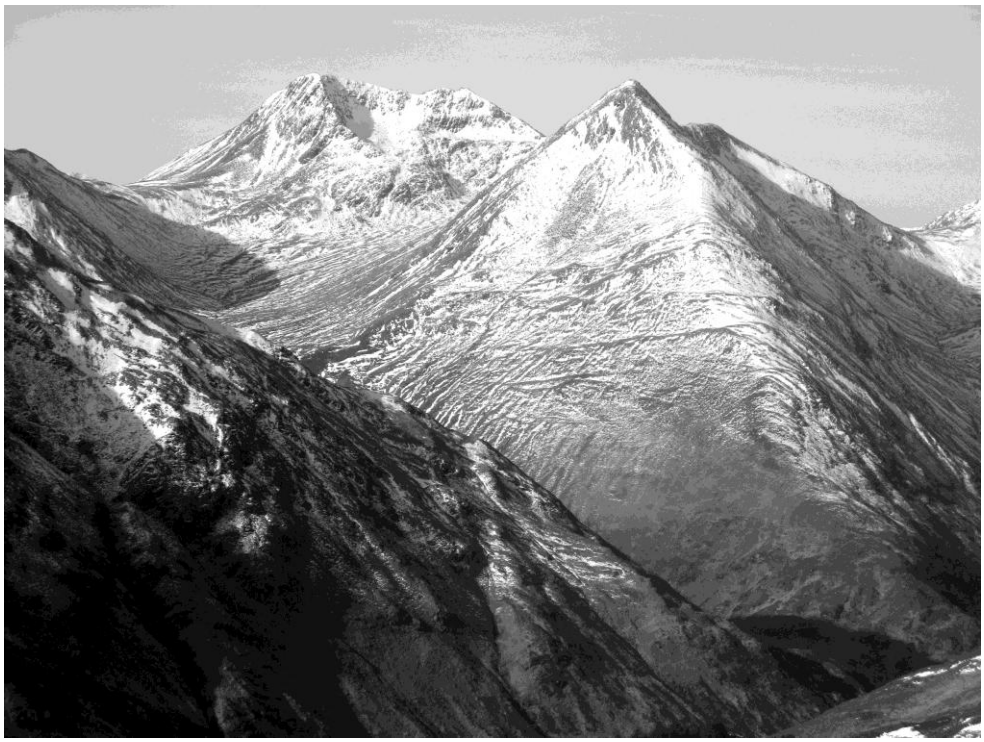
Why do we do it? Three formerly keen walkers and tickers I know have abandoned the hills due to physical decrepitude and taken up model railway building. Don't knock it, even Rod Stewart's got one. On the surface, mountains and train-sets seem poles apart but in trying to comprehend the attraction of the latter and a possible connection, I watched a documentary about the pastime. One model railway fanatic summed it up thus: "It's essentially a pointless activity. It's not going to get anyone a meal on their table or save someone's life but it might save someone's sanity."

Recently I met an acquaintance, all smug face and puffed-out chest, reporting his own completion of the Tops. It was time to turn the tables and have some fun.

"The deleted ones too?"

He went silent, followed by a quiver of his bottom lip.

(Many thanks to Dave Hewitt for feedback on an earlier draft.)



"Despite originally being subject to an error in height assessment, less than 3000 feet but not a Corbett, Faochag in Glen Shiel needs no excuses; its marvellous shape so aptly named." Sgurr na Sgine in the background.

(*Photo credit*: **Mike Dixon**)

Dave and Lachlan by Grant Hutchison

In 1993, the Boon Companion and I were driving past Dalwhinnie, and I remarked on how odd it was that there were four Munros named Geal Charn concentrated in that area.

"But," I mused, "I suppose it would be handy if you were climbing all the Munros in alphabetical order."

And that would have been the end of that, if a colleague hadn't passed me a copy of TAC9 a few days later, remarking presciently, "You might be interested in this."

A week after that, I sent TAC a short story about a man named Lachlan who was climbing all the Munros in alphabetical order. The editorial address was a tower block in the Gorbals, and I took due note of the submissions advice:

> Anyone submitting an article on disk, whether 3.5″ or 5.25″, is a good egg.
> **ASCII** format please.

So then I got a two-page letter back from Dave, and the story appeared in TAC10, illustrated by Chris Tyler. And after a few more submissions, and a few more letters, Dave decided that Chris and I really should collaborate on a book, the first to be published by his nascent TACit Press – and featuring two more Lachlan stories. Chris's lovely, clever artwork firmly cemented my mental image of what Lachlan "really" looked like, and established how he would be described in subsequent stories.

Another three Lachlans appeared in later issues of the Corrie. And eventually a full baker's dozen, old and new, would be assembled in *The Complete Lachlan* (2014). Dave singlehandedly got me back into writing again, after a ten-year lapse, and I haven't really stopped since. He literally changed my life, and I'll always be in his debt for that. (Dave always hated the use of the word *literally*, even when it was used literally, so I imagine him snorting "I see what you just did!" at this point.)

From time to time, someone will tell me how they miss reading Lachlan stories. Below, **Mike Watson** has gone to a bit of an extreme, and has written his own Lachlan story.

LACHLAN and the CORBETT CONUNDRUM

Boom. The house shuddered like a junked car in a crusher. I buried my head under the duvet; it was 2 am, and Storm Hewitt had made an early, uninvited entrance.

Five seconds later: *Boom, boom*. I dragged my weary carcass out of bed, shuffled downstairs, and opened the door to a manic-looking Lachlan.

"It's time," he barked, bursting past me to flick the kettle on and gather my hill gear with a terrifying, well-coordinated economy of motion. Five minutes later, I was buckled into the passenger seat, balancing a scalding coffee and trying to ignore the G-forces as Lachlan pinned the accelerator northwards.

"What's the rush, Lachie?"

"I've outsmarted the bastards," he grinned. "They'll have to go back."

"Who, Lachie?"

"The SMC, of course. Keep up."

The penny finally dropped. Despite his vocal disdain for the common Munro bagger, Lachlan viewed the pursuit of Corbetts as a noble endeavour for the true connoisseur. Over pints in the Clachaig, he'd often wax lyrical about "Old Corbett" being a genius. He'd always planned to finish his round on the curious twin summits of Buidhe Bheinn and Sgurr a' Bhac Chaolais, but his dream had been derailed when a Scottish Mountaineering Club survey demoted the latter to Top status.

"How are you doing that? You can't move a mountain."

He thrust a battered geological map at me. "Fault lines. There's a whopper crossing the bealach," he said. "I've done the maths. It's doable."

Now, Lachlan had been rather quiet over the last few months of unbroken good weather. Whilst all of us were enjoying blue skies and dry ground Lachlan was nowhere to be seen. I was now getting curious as to why today, the day the good weather broke, he chose to pretty much kidnap me, and drive to an unknown location in the Highlands.

"What has maths got to do with it?"

"We just need to lower the bealach a wee bit and there you go, Sgurr a' Bhac Chaolais regains its rightful Corbett status."

It was at that point I noticed the huge rucksack on the back seats.

"The final piece of the jigsaw," he noted, seeing my gaze.

"What jigsaw? What's in there?"

"Detonators. Didn't want to leave them lying around the hill. They don't like the wet."

I looked nervously at the now precarious rucksack leaning against my seat. “But you’d need explosives for that.”

“Aye, lots of explosives. Took me weeks to get them up there.”

“Lachie, you don’t just buy explosives on eBay. Where did you get them?”

“Mate down the quarry. They have short shelf-lives. They’re always getting rid of the stuff – and he owed me a favour. Been ferrying it up the hill now for weeks.”

I looked even more nervously at the rucksack and imagined a giant alarm clock ticking inside it. “Lachie, you can’t just go blowing up hills. What if you get caught?”

“There’s great gouges and man-made holes all over the Highlands. What about that big quarry in Moidart, or those Hydro schemes? It’s alright for them.”

“But there must be permissions and things they had to get.”

“You don’t need permission when a storm covers your tracks. No-one will be the wiser. They’ll look at the map and think it was a landslide. We just need to check it looks okay, and job done. No-one is going to investigate a landslide away from a road.”

He had a point – Storm Hewitt was looking like a bad one. “Why bring me, Lachie?”

“Fitting the detonators isn’t a one-man job. You know the hills and don’t mind a bit of bad weather. Anyway, nearly there.”

The rain hammered down as we arrived at the parking in Glen Shiel. I wasn’t looking forward to the slog up the hill, the rain, or Lachlan’s explosive rucksack. Also, to avoid ticking the hill off, we had to do a tedious contour round to reach the bealach.

Several hours slogging uphill later, after a lot of grumbling, we’d arrived. To my surprise, his handiwork was well-hidden.

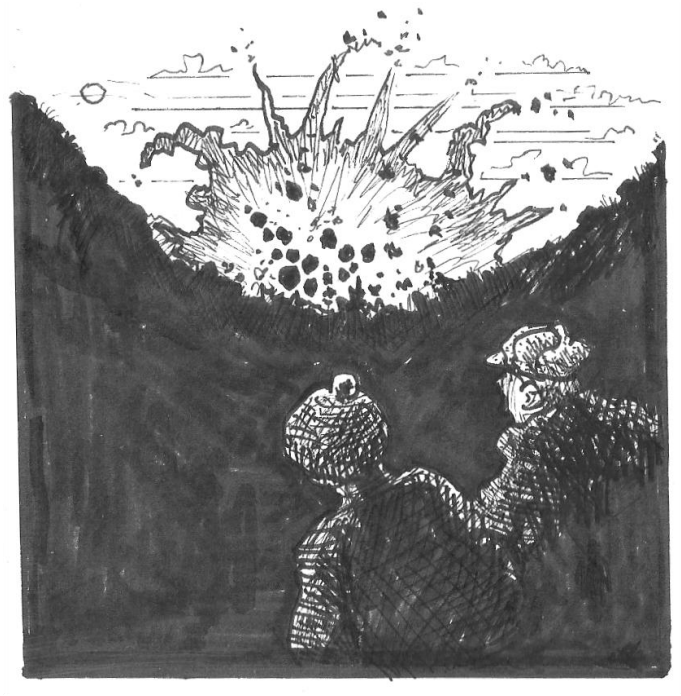
He set to work on the detonators, handing me a huge golfing umbrella to shield them from the rain. My second pair of hands, it turns out, were to simply keep his precious cargo dry.

“Done. Let’s get clear,” he muttered. We hunkered behind a boulder whilst Lachlan fiddled with a red button.

“Three... Two... One...” *Whoompffff!!!!*

The earth shuddered, my ears rang, and a cocktail of heather, mud, and schist whipped through the gale. I made a mental note to check the British Geological Survey earthquake data when we got back to civilisation.

We peered round the boulder. A steaming chasm stretched neatly across the bealach. Even in the rain it was clear that this had worked.



Lachlan hopped up and with a deftness I’d never seen before sprinted over and descended into the gloom. “Amazing! Better results than expected! Come on down!”

Nervously, I followed. I had to give him credit – it was quite incredible. The fault had neatly ripped open into a graceful scoop, perfectly lowering the bealach. And it was still navigable.

“There’ll be a path in weeks when the baggers have to return.” Lachlan was busy with a GPS, measuring the depth of the new bealach. “Even accounting for errors, we’ve more than done it. Can’t wait to phone the SMC and get them back out here. Just a few more minutes—”

There was a low rumble, like thunder.

“Storm’s picking up. Still got time to get the data...”

Something told me to look up. “Lachie. Run!”

I grabbed him as we scrambled up the slope. There was a roar as the entire south ridge of Sgurr a’ Bhac Chaolais gracefully slid downward. In seconds, the mountain had reclaimed its territory, neatly filling in Lachlan’s excavation.

We stood in the rain, stunned. Lachlan stared at his geological map as it dissolved into pulp. “A second fault line,” he whispered. “The vibrations triggered it.”

The drive back south was a funeral procession of stony silence. Lachlan stared into the middle distance, processing the defeat. But as we neared home, the old spark returned. “We’re not beaten. I’m sure Buidhe Bheinn has a weakness!”

Mike Watson

A shared love of cats and the Highlands by Paul Hesp

On a visit to her home town, Edinburgh, late summer 1994, my wife got me a copy of an unusual hillwalking magazine: *The Angry Corrie* (No.19, to be exact). I had been on long treks in Scotland and had been involved in getting a then offbeat Dutch walking magazine started, for which I still wrote, so Evelyn thought I might be interested. I was knocked over by TAC: from the title to Murdo Munro (Dave) as Botticelli's Venus and the Bolt-On™ Fracture Repair Kit – where did they get it from? I immediately wrote a Letter to the Editor, to which Dave replied with, "I like getting intelligent letters." Which encouraged me to stay in touch. Eventually, I contributed half a dozen texts and a couple of letters to TAC.

With a base camp at my in-laws' home near Inverness, I regularly visited the Highlands. At some point I wrote to Dave that I'd like to meet him before flying back from Glasgow. He invited me to stay with him at his flat in the Gorbals and would pick me up at Buchanan Bus Station. I had no trouble recognising him in the cafe: his TAC portrayals by Craig Smillie and Chris Tyler weren't far off. In the evening, he cooked dinner. He took a saucepan and tipped in a tin of ravioli plus a tin of tuna. Afterwards, we went for a drink in a nearby pub. "Don't you think he looks European?" he asked, indicating a man at the bar. Of course I was the expert, but I was totally baffled: Finnish, French, Bulgarian? Had all my hillwalking in Britain made me look different? I was to discover that this man with a planet-sized brain was also, despite repeated invitations to come and do some comparative walking in Austria, "Mr Stay-at-home" (his words). He could seem vaguely puzzled by my accounts of field work for the UN's Vienna office, but was quite pleased with the photo showing me reading TAC in the Kremlin.

At some point, not having heard from him for a long time, I mailed Perkin Warbeck to find out what the matter was. "Romancing like crazy," was the answer. And so, I got to know Tessa. At first sight, in terms of feet and inches, they seemed an odd couple. But they both loved the outdoors and a simple life, shared a quiet sense of humour and were generous hosts at Cambuskenneth.

In many ways Dave and I were totally different: height, hill ambitions, number-juggling skills, knowledge of chess and cricket (I kept a safe distance from the *Wisden* volumes on the bookshelf in the Cambuskenneth living room). We shared magpie minds plus a love of cats and the Highlands. Walks with him inevitably included Ben Cleuch, and with Dave's encouragement I added some Munros to my very modest bag. Under his influence, I also started to do some record keeping, and I am pleased that the total of linked-up walks above the Highland Line reached a total of exactly 2222 km (counting map squares) before decrepitude limited me to repeats and walks in the Inverness area, which don't count under my private rules.

TAC combined wild humour with serious stuff, like contributions on access and the related land ownership issues, and merciless book reviews. That combination made it very different from other outdoor magazines I know. Most tend to have what I call a "sun, sand and surf" approach to the outdoors (go to an Embra, Amsterdam, Oslo or Vienna bookshop and just look at the covers). In many ways TAC reminded me of *Private Eye*, including the cluttered layout. There was also a lot of interaction on the pages – another difference with the run-of-the-mill outdoor mags. The letters page was always a pleasure to read, even if (or because) the knives were out occasionally. Politically, TAC was definitely left of centre – yet another difference – but hardly green. The dominant view in TAC seems to have been that the hills should be a sporting estate for everyone, not just a handful of billionaires or titled idiots.

It's a pity Dave gave up on TAC, but, as he then wrote to me: "You can only go so many times around the block" – though TAC was never a product of routine.

But Dave had so many other things to do. He may not have been rich, but he had a rich life, to quote a speaker at his funeral service.

Ochils, May 2008 (*Photo credit*: **Paul Hesp**)

Behind the scenes at TAC Towers

by Tessa Carroll

TAC Towers was originally – and appropriately – a Gorbals high-rise, but when the Ed moved out to Alva in spring 1997 and then moved in with me in Stirling a couple of years later, TAC moved with him. And so it was that I was eased into the production side, taking over proofreading from Jools, a hard act to follow. I only did so on the understanding that I took no responsibility whatsoever for the accuracy of the numbers (oh, the numbers…).

By the time I came on board, there was a regular crew of contributors and more came and went over the years. The sheer variety of their contributions was always a joy, though the more number-filled pedantic ones did make my eyes glaze over. Proofreading meant getting early sight of all the articles and assuring the Ed that the funny pieces were indeed funny, the numbers pieces were indeed full of numbers, and the annual quiz was indeed even more fiendish and bonkers than the previous year's.

TAC production was always a mix of new and old tech. The Ed had done a fair amount of desktop publishing work for various organisations so was a whizz with PageMaker DTP software. Nevertheless, fitting in as much text as possible meant that TAC's pages were so crammed that the page numbers couldn't be inserted in the footer; he would painstakingly squeeze them in at the bottom of the page with Letraset instead. And cut and paste was literally that for the cartoons and illustrations sent in on paper by Chris and Craig.

When all the pages were finally assembled, it was time to head to Clydeside Press in Glasgow. The challenge was to find a parking meter near enough to be able to get in and out within the shortest possible parking charge time – easier when dropping off than when picking up. (The Ed prided himself on never having paid to park in Stirling in his twenty-eight years living in the area, but even he accepted that wasn't possible in central Glasgow.)

Once the boxes of TACs came back to the house, it was time for the envelope stuffing, with the subscriptions list to be checked and letters added to those readers due to renew. Those letters led to a flurry of incoming cheques, and considering the Ed claimed not to understand numbers if they had a pound sign in front of them, he coped with managing the TAC bank account very well.

There used to be a special ink stamp for the envelopes – I think it had Murdo Munro on it but it disappeared in the geological layers of Stuff in the Ed's study years ago. In an early session of envelope stuffing, I was happily stamping away in rather random fashion when he stopped me and said the stamp needed to be lined up properly – parallel with the edges of the envelope, not any old how. Really. *Hmph*. I handed over the stamp, resisting the temptation to tell him to stick it where the sun don't shine, and left him to it. Somehow, the stamping was quietly abandoned in later years.

Next came sending out the stuffed envelopes to subscribers, which could only be done in batches over several days to avoid clogging up the postbox, and, in TAC's last few years, after we moved to Cambuskenneth, also meant trekking across the foot-bridge over the Forth to the postbox with a wide enough slot.

And there were the delivery runs to the shop outlets, which the Ed combined with a hill or two where possible, ideally on a good weather day.

TAC was truly a labour of love, but the love came back from its readers in the form of letters enthusing or pointing out errors or adding details or taking issue with opinions expressed, and there are stacks of fat lever arch files full of them in the Ed's study. Thank goodness email correspondence gradually replaced letters or there'd be absolutely no chance of the room fulfilling its other function of spare bedroom. Some readers even lobbied for more frequent publication, which was flattering but showed a complete lack of understanding of the amount of free labour involved.

Fielding phone calls from people who seemed to think TAC was run by a vast media organisation in which I was (obviously, being female) a secretary was a frequent occurrence. Some callers were very persistent and took some telling that the Ed was the only person to speak to and that no, he was not some important person who should not be bothered with trivialities like phone calls. How on earth they thought it could be a business with money to employ staff was a mystery, given that it sold for just 50p from its start in 1991 until early 2005, when he finally and with great reluctance raised the price to an exorbitant £1, and that it had no advertising to subsidise costs; but apparently they did think that.

However, there was an upside to the phone calls: bagging well-known hill/mountain men (and they were almost all men). The pinnacle was the phone call from a voice with a familiar accent (Nottingham, I thought, where my mother came from): it turned out to be Doug Scott.

The TAC years seem a long time ago now and I wonder at the enthusiasm and commitment it took to keep it going for so long and at such a high standard. My part in it was a minor one but its part in my life was far bigger. After all, if it weren't for TAC, I'd probably never even have met the Ed, let alone spent almost half my life with him.

One weekend in the early 90s, when Dave was still based in Glasgow, we arranged for him to come through to Stirling for a day in the hills.

He arrived at the station, and predictably the weather was "mixed", so we decided to head north in search of better conditions. I drove us up the A84, through Lochearnhead (Stuc and Vorlich did not look appealing), past Ben Lawers (ditto), traversed the Kirkmichael road to assess any options toward Glenshee (no luck), down to Blairgowrie – then we lowered our targets and thought of the Lomond Hills. They were to the southeast, so must be clear by now. No way, they also looked unappealing, so we returned toward Stirling along the cloud-bound Ochils. And then saw Dumyat – CLEAR! So we pulled into the Orchard car park and headed straight up the steep central gully of its southern top, only to be greeted by a string of oaths and curses from a shepherd, who was attempting to drive his flock down the gully. We immediately (but maybe not that helpfully) moved to either side of the gully, and the shepherd managed to persuade the sheep to go down between us.

So eventually we went on to achieve our summit for the day, a couple of miles from where we had set off in the morning, but involving around 170 miles of driving. Alison, waiting at home with two young kids to entertain on that largely dismal day, was not impressed.

Mike Adam

One very hot day Dave, Mike Adam and I went up Lewis Hill above North Third reservoir. At the top we found the gorse starting to burn because some tw*ts had chucked a hot barbecue down the cliff and it had burned back up. The reservoir was the obvious source of water to put it out, but the only receptacle we had was an old coke bottle without a top (memories sparked of the TAC piece about the uselessness of water bottles). I scrambled down the cliff and through the jungle, filled the bottle and scrambled back up again, trying not to spill it.

This took some time, and the tiny amount of water had bugger all effect on the fire, so Dave called the fire brigade. It was a dialogue of the deaf. They had just replaced local call-centres with a central one in Edinburgh, so had no idea where Lewis Hill or North Third were. Dave gave them grid refs for the fire and the nearest car park but their spanking new system only worked on post codes. ("It's a hill, it doesn't have a post code.") Eventually the person on the other end said she thought she knew where we were and Dave rang off. Nothing then happened for a while.

We tried putting the fire out / controlling it using the obvious sources of liquid available to three blokes, and spent some time stomping on new outbreaks where it had burned horizontally through the peat. Eventually Dave rang again and after some more shenanigans was put through to the actual firemen. They had gone to the wrong car park but when one of them walked up the road he was on he could see us jumping up and down and waving. About twenty minutes later two rather out-of-breath firemen turned up carrying a large plastic box full of water which slightly surprisingly did the job. They said they intended to do another run to make sure, but we scarpered at that point, reckoning we'd done our bit.

Iain Thow

I only communicated with him online, we never met, but I felt that he was someone who was a friend, a bothy-mate, someone to have a pint with in the Kingshouse or Clachaig. His esteemed organ, *The Angry Corrie*, was a breath of fresh air, good humour and down-to-earth pragmatism amongst the glossy magazines recounting mighty (and mighty expensive) deeds in the high Himalaya. Deeds amongst the sheep and rain of Glen Coe, Galloway, Skye and the Cairngorms were more appealing, as they were the familiar stuff of the hiker in Scotland. I felt my hill-cred soar when I had a letter printed therein.

"Caberfeidh"

It was Dave that got me started on trig pillars. "Trig Stuff" (TAC55 p12) recounts how someone had spotted a 21m trig on *Landranger* 97 and wondered if there were any lower than that. Dave came back with a few nearby, plus a comprehensive-looking listing of low-level Scottish trigs by height: 2m, then a continuous sequence from 4m up to 20m (you have to go into England to complete the sequence down to -1m). There being no comprehensive heighted list available in those days, he compiled his own, by poring over the map sheets to spot the blue triangles, and then set about bagging trigs in ascending order. I wonder how high he got.

Rob Woodall

In 1991 I bought the first edition of TAC, probably at Nevisport in Fort William. We were in the full throes of Munro-bagging at the time and had a July weekend climbing Ben Starav and Glas Bheinn Mhor on the Saturday and the Grey Corries on the Sunday.

I wrote a letter to the Ed and he wrote back, and then we continued writing, and later emailing, for the next thirty-four years. I had my first letter published in TAC4 and then started writing articles, sometimes on topics of my choosing, sometimes based on ideas from the Ed. I loved doing it and have missed it.

The Ed was exacting in matters of clarity, grammar and punctuation. I can be prickly about criticism but he always got the tone right, even when making me "kill my darlings", and he improved my text immeasurably.

In post-TAC years, our correspondence ranged over a wide set of subjects. Hills featured of course: he was always chivvying me to do more, especially as I developed a post-Covid / lockdown lethargy. I realised when I added my first walk after his death to the diary list, that I recorded my activities as much for his benefit as

mine, to be ready when asked for my end of year statistics.

Then there was cricket, politics, quirky bits of news (especially about "Old People") and more recently chess. My mistake had been to show an interest in the Lichess online matches during lockdown, leading to him sending me screeds of incomprehensible details despite my attempts to dissuade him.

Most days, I see an item that I would have discussed with Dave. Tessa and I have agreed to keep sending them to each other, knowing that we shall be saying "Dave would have loved this" for the rest of our lives.

Val Hamilton

For at least twenty years I was one of countless hill folk in Dave's vast network of email correspondents. But he and I also tended to run into each other at random intervals and locations – on the Ochils of course, occasionally at voluntary body meetings and (alas) at funerals, but also quite often in the cafe or the search room at the National Library of Scotland, where Dave was ferreting out obscure details of early Munro baggers and their activities. Besides being the quirky moving spirit and fastidious editor of his *zeitgeist*-shaping fanzine, and an exceptionally well-informed outdoors journalist, Dave was a forensic researcher, a genuine scholar in his specialist field. The late lamented Robin Campbell, himself a passionately assiduous archivist for the Scottish Mountaineering Club, held Dave in high regard not only for his unassuming depth and breadth of knowledge, but also for his ability to strike up a personal rapport with the ancient Munroists that he tracked down. Dave had a very human touch, also expressed in the warm empathy of the obituaries he compiled. And he was an incisive reviewer, minutely dissecting key texts by masters like Hamish Brown and Bill Murray.

In my experience Dave was wholly unpretentious, straightforward and openly self-revealing, always pleased to see you. Re-reading TAC and emails from Dave in recent days reminds me what we've lost: an engagingly unique character, obsessed with statistics, maps, Compleaters and fiendish quizzes, rich in surreal and debunking humour, but driven by an all-embracing passionate curiosity for hills in all their aspects, and for hill-goers in their infinite variety. One of a kind, both in his deliciously quirky mind and in his unmistakable lean and lanky physical presence – I'll always picture Dave as he summarised himself, "ridiculously tall". I'm glad I knew him; so sad that he's gone far too soon from all our lives.

Bob Aitken

Myself and two friends set out to climb Ben Avon and Beinn a' Bhuird from the public car park at Invercauld. Needing a toilet break before our walk, I went into the public toilets. The walls were plastered with pages from *The Angry Corrie*. Sitting on the throne, I was completely fascinated and spent far, far too much time reading the pages. Safe to say when I did eventually go to stand up, my legs were completely dead, no blood had been reaching them for quite a fair amount of time.

Willie Duncan

I was saddened to hear that Dave Hewitt had passed away recently, and with his passing it appears that the final chapter of *The Angry Corrie* is now being written. I'd never met Dave in person, but had corresponded by email back when I was a regular reader and contacted him for a copy of his *Walking the Watershed* book. As someone who was getting more serious about my hillwalking in the mid-1990s, and an avid reader of all things hill-related, my attention was captured by a black and white cartoon-covered magazine which appeared at the tills of many outdoor stores in Glasgow (*Survival Aids* and the like), which appealed to me immensely, with its mixture of statistics, wit and pedantry. What shone through was Dave's personality, and his off-the-wall approach to what was, in some other printed works of the time, a severe and humourless pastime. In those pre-internet days, when only a vague publishing date was hinted at, I would be out scouring Glasgow's outdoor shops in search of the latest issue, and was always filled with joy when I spotted a new issue near the tills. Having secured my copy, I would head home to devour it from cover to cover, and it was never a good idea to read it while on the train, as it would inevitably have me snorting and laughing out loud.

Since Dave's passing I have taken the time to revisit some of the old issues online, as my collection had long since gone in one of my many house moves, and I found myself taken back to a time when my hair was all the one colour, and both my knees worked, and it was still as funny as I remembered. It encapsulates a happy period of history for me, and I am so glad that Dave created this magazine. Now, in a world of thirty-second video clips and content which is forgotten almost as quickly as it is pumped out, there is still room for the written word, and it is nice to think that Dave's work will live on, still bringing a smile to our faces for years to come.

At random, I downloaded some early copies of TAC, and a later one, purely on the basis that I recalled the cover picture from some twenty years ago. I always enjoyed the "*Ed—*" interjections, and in this issue the topic of discussions was mountain memorials. In his response to one letter, Dave responded that should someone feel moved to commemorate him, a tree in a park or glen would do nicely. Somewhere where people could take shade or shelter, where cats would climb, and where dogs may have a pee. I would hope that perhaps through this final issue we can make this small thing happen.

Thanks for the memories, Dave.

Jim Cassidy

It was a fine early spring day in the late noughties, and Dave and I had arranged to meet up with RDS, Dave's former boss, to venture into Glen Lochay and tackle Creag Mhor and Beinn Heasgarnich.

Approaching the foot of Creag Mhor, the warmth in the morning sun spawned a long discussion about whether the snow field above us was likely to avalanche. In the end we took a diversion below it, more to the sun-sheltered west. But still the snow had softened, and as Dave was leading (he always being keen on traverses), it gave way and he slid past me upright on a slab of snow – until he lost balance, and started tumbling down the slope like an acrobat doing a routine on a steeply sloping floor.

He ended up spreadeagled in the snow, twenty metres below us, where the ground was less steep. Thankfully he was uninjured, but I think we were all quite shaken, so after successfully gaining the summit of Creag Mhor, we abandoned our intended ascent of Heasgarnich, all too aware of the fickleness of even beautiful winter days.

Mike Adam

This happened in Glen Isla, I think.

(And at this point I have a strong urge to email Dave, who, after fishing out his Battered Old Ledger, would have been able to give me the location, date, and hills climbed.)

Dave and I were wandering downhill along the line of a dilapidated wire fence, talking about silly names for cats, or the use of the word "loth", or the weird Dundonian metathesis that means I still sometimes say *westren* instead of *western*. Just another day on the hill with Dave, in other words – until we became aware of a young red deer stag doing something *very* strange in the col below us. It was leaping wildly around, tossing its head, and then staggering and lurching and almost falling off its feet, over and over again.

As we approached, we realised that it had got one of its antlers entangled in a loop of wire from the fence. It had maybe fifteen metres of play, but it was firmly tethered to one of the sagging metal fenceposts.

We stopped and watched as it leapt and bucked, wrenching its neck painfully when it ran up against the limit of its wire tether.

"We can't leave it like that," said Dave.

"What can we do?" I asked. "We can't get near it."

Round about then, the deer stopped trying. It just stood with its head bowed, panting audibly, its legs quivering.

"OK," said Dave, and started walking slowly towards 150 kilograms of frightened animal with spikes on its head.

"Dave," I said. "Dave. That's really dangerous."

And he kept on walking.

He found the near end of the wire where it lay on the ground, and stepped on to it. Then, like Blondin on his high wire crossing Niagara Falls, he started to pace slowly towards the deer, placing each foot carefully, one in front of the other on the wire.

The deer quivered and drooled and rolled its eyes in his direction.

"Dave," I said, "Dave," and then couldn't think what else to say. He was doing a mad, brave thing because he couldn't stand to see this beast suffering, but I couldn't imagine how this was going to end except unpleasantly.

As he approached, the deer slowly bowed its head closer to the ground. Then, with a sudden burst of panicky energy, it reared on its hind legs and leapt away from Dave; hit the limit of the wire, which was now more firmly anchored by Dave's weight, and broke free.

It galloped off down the hill, tossing its head, and Dave turned and strolled back towards me.

"That turned out well," he said, approvingly.

Grant Hutchison

I have fond memories of visiting my local WH Smith to find a quiet corner to read Dave's monthly bagging column in TGO. To my knowledge nothing like it was available at the time. It was one of those moments when you realised there were other baggers that existed, and you weren't the only one ploughing a lonely furrow!

Myrddyn Phillips

Dave Hewitt first came to my attention when he contacted me asking if I would do some illustrations and maps for his book *Walking the Watershed*. I think he must have come across my cartoons in the *West Highland Free Press*. As I remember it, he sent a parcel of maps with his route marked on it, and the text of the book; I remember sitting in the garden shed I used as a studio, drawing maps of places I had never heard of...

The first time I actually met him was when he invited me down to Glasgow to watch the demolition of the high-rise flats where he used to live, in the Gorbals. So Kevin and I drove down in his battered red Landrover, watched the flats come down, then attended the recording of the *Golden Cagoule* quiz show, a spin-off of Muriel Gray's *Munro Show*.

I didn't actually spend a lot of time on the hill with him, except when he needed a Skye tick. I remember doing Bruach na Frithe with him, Warbeck and my sister Ros (her first Munro).

One memorable day saw his partner Tessa dropping us off at the Quiraing car park, before going off to do more sensible tourist stuff. We walked from there to the Storr, by which time I was absolutely knackered, keeping up with his long-legged stride. We'd left my car at the Rigg burn so

thankfully headed down via Carn Liath to the road.

He did drag me up Dumyat one time when I visited him at Cambuskenneth, but I never managed Ben Cleuch.

Kevin and I were there when he finally conquered the In Pinn; he tried to coax us up onto Sgurr Mhic Choinnich as well, but we were too tired.

And of course we were there on the Saddle for his Compleation. Kevin and I climbed up from the campsite at Glenshiel. As we climbed the ridge into cloud we started hearing voices from all directions, and when we finally reached the top there were thirty or so folk there.

I used to shamelessly use Cambuskenneth as a handy halfway stop when visiting family in Yorkshire; sleeping in their spare room absolutely crammed with maps, guide books, chess books, an entire set of *Wisden*...

Much missed!

Chris Tyler

I'd been in touch with Dave Hewitt, editor of *The Angry Corrie* ("Scotland's favourite hill fanzine", apparently) and we'd arranged to meet for a short walk up his local hill, Dumyat – a small but characterful hill on the west end of the Ochils.

I wasn't quite sure how I'd manage after my twenty-two mile stint the day before, but nevertheless headed off from Kirkcaldy for the relatively short drive to Cambuskenneth, where Dave lived. Dave greeted me at the car, and we went into his house for a cup of tea. A quick browse of the bookshelves demonstrated he was clearly a cricket lover – every copy of *Wisden* since the year dot. There were even one or two books that I also had on my shelves. He was quite loquacious, not the shy and retiring chap Mr Bearhop had led me to believe.

We finished our tea, and then set off for one of the car parks sited on the Hillfoots road, beneath Dumyat. We set off initially turning right over the stile, then heading up hill, following what seemed to me to be a maze of paths which wended their way up through gorse bushes. I found the going fairly arduous and was glad of the occasional stop – at one point with excellent though slightly hazy views out across the Forth valley.

Dave related some interesting stories – some about his "'shed" walk, as he calls the epic watershed traverse he undertook in the late 1980s.

The discussion continued and, once we were over the worst of the steep slopes, Dave pointed out to me one of the narrow gullies, which I subsequently found out was Raeburn's Gully – now only for experienced climbers as a result of the many who had climbed previously, leaving loose material lying on the precipitous slope.

Dave was principally a freelance writer, picking up pieces of work every now and then. He had launched *The Angry Corrie* in 1991, and there was now a core group of writers he could call upon for contributions. He was reluctant to turn the magazine into something mainstream, as the great benefit of TAC, in his view, was that it remained independent of mainstream publishers and therefore did not have to toe any particular publisher or promoter line. He was not a "joiner" as he put it, and I could appreciate his sentiments – I'm not a "joiner" either!

We reached the summit cairn, touched it, and then went over to touch a piece of ground a little way from it which Dave believed was the actual highest point – then sat down for a small snack, greeting a couple of runners who were recovering from their own exertions.

Dave was able to point out the local hills, including those in the Ochils I hadn't done – Bengengie above Alva for instance. Further afield, I was a little surprised to see Tinto; a little nearer, the Pentlands; and to the north Ben Vorlich and Stuc a' Chroin in the cloud. I asked him about his views on wind farms – OK in their rightful place, but not to the sacrifice of the best of the Scottish landscape scenery. That's an interesting thought – how do you define what is or isn't picturesque? Beauty in the eye of the beholder and all that...

Over the years, TAC has regularly challenged the position of that great public face of hillwalking in Scotland – Cameron McNeish. I had found the articles in TAC concerning Mr McNeish most illuminating. Dave expressed his strongly held views that the *Corbett Almanac* had plagiarised the SMC's own publication. One of his (many) supporting pieces of evidence being the description of the "Inverlochlarig Tourist Information Centre" near Balquhidder, which anyone who's been along that road knows cannot be so described, yet McNeish's book just repeats the misinformation.

The route down took us through stretches of overgrown bracken, but there was a path of sorts, which eventually brought us out very close to the car park. A most illuminating three hours, and something which I for one was hoping to repeat, perhaps on a different hill.

David Steane

Recently spotted by Val Hamilton. Available for purchase at your local Tesco Extra.

MURDO MUNRO
- and the IN PINN -
the battered old ledger
He's a BUGGER of a BAGGER
(He's bagged 281!)
Gosh! It says here in "FABLED HILLZINE" the Angry Corrie that ANNA WELLS has emulated Martin Moran's winter round
Most of my ill-fated attempts on my OLD NEMESIS have involved macho guides like MR RIDGEWAY
Maybe A CHANGE? Also I see she is a SKYE GUIDE. Her clients look happy enough...
THE ANGRY CORRIE
It's KILL or be KILLED, Murdo!
AARGH!
AW
Hello, Dr Wells...
... I'd love to, Murdo!
Ed's voice: "Warbeck, are you finally going to allow Murdo to summit the In Pinn?"
Warbeck's voice: "Well, I'll need to check with The Swan"
Gosh! Anna Wells has been known to PARAGLIDE off the summits! I wonder if the PURISTS approve?
PURIST
BAGGING RULES
AND SO...
OK, Doctor Wells, shall we CONFRONT THE IMPOSTOR!?
WARBECK & THE SWAN ©2026
Gosh, Dr Wells, there's QUITE A QUEUE!
Yes, Murdo. You've got DANNY MACASKILL doing the In Pinn on an e-bike...
You have a former ROYAL MARINE carrying a ROWING MACHINE...
and CHRIS TYLER and KEVIN SUTTON just LOUNGING ABOUT!
This is going to take all day! What say we do the SHARP SIDE?!
You're a NATURAL, Murdo!
Are you going to KISS THE BOLSTER STONE?
Ooo-Er, Missus!!
AND SO...
INTO THE SUNSET!

The 1980s (*Photo Credits*: **Dave MacLaren**)

Munro completion, The Saddle, 22/7/07 (*Photo Credits*: **Dave MacLaren**)

The Saddle, 22/7/07
(*Photo credit*: **Bert Barnett**)

With Warbeck, Stob Gabhar, 12/5/02
(*Photo credit*: **Bert Barnett**)

Wainwright completion, Catbells, 30/6/18
(*Photo credit*: **Dave MacLaren**)

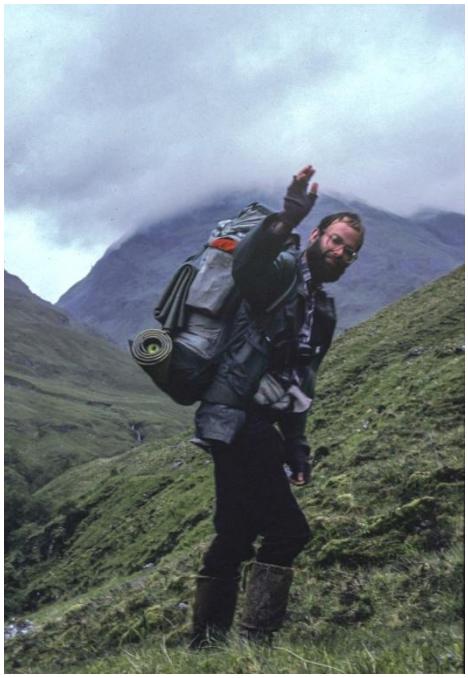
Ben Lomond, May 2013 (*Photo credits*: **Paul Hesp**)

The early 1990s at TAC Towers, photographer unknown

Stac Pollaidh, 1990s (*Photo credit*: **Perkin Warbeck**)

Full Lawers ridge traverse, 16/8/03

Ben Lawers and Beinn Ghlas in winter, 18/2/07
(*Photo credits*: **Perkin Warbeck**)



Watershed: below Gates of Affric, 7/6/87
(*Photo credit*: **Perkin Warbeck**)

In Pinn conquered, 22/8/04
(*Photo credit*: **Chris Tyler**)

Glas Maol, 7/11/23
(*Photo credit*: **Bill Cook**)